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THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

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The Preacher's complete homiletical commentary on the Old Testament

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THE PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

ON THE

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

THE

Preacher's Complete Homiletical

COMMENTARY

ON THE

OLD TESTAMENT

(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN)

With Critical and Explanatory Notes, Indices, &c., &c.

BY

VARIOUS AUTHORS.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
NEW YORK AND LONDON

A

HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE PROPHECIES OF

ISAIAH.

BY

R. A. BERTRAM,

AUTHOR OF "THE HOMILETIC ENCYCLOPÆDIA," ETC. ETC.

AND

ALFRED TUCKER.

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PREFATORY NOTES.

1. In the preparation of this Commentary, my aim throughout has been evangelical and practical. A study of the Book of Isaiah suggests many historical, critical, and speculative questions, but these I have entirely disregarded. I have asked only, What messages from God has this inspired prophet for the men of this generation? What instruction has he to give us? What warnings? What encouragements? What consolations? To these questions I believe there are answers in the outlines I have myself prepared, and in those I have obtained from other sources.

2. As my work proceeded, my methods somewhat changed. I discovered that I had commenced the Commentary on too large a scale, and that it was in danger of becoming too large and costly. I therefore ceased to append illustrations to the outlines, and contented myself with giving references to illustrations in my "*Homiletic Encyclopædia of Illustrations in Theology and Morals*" and my "*Dictionary of Poetical Illustrations*," using for this purpose the letters H. E. I. and P. D.

3. I also ceased to prepare outlines on *all* the texts, and limited myself to those most likely to be profitable to ordinary congregations.

4. As I proceeded, I also became more convinced that a book intended to be helpful to many minds should contain the best thoughts of many minds; and therefore, instead of preparing outlines which might be expanded into sermons, I condensed sermons preached by others into outlines. Remembering that I was working for ministers, I stripped the *thoughts* contained in those sermons of most of their dress, and so the substance of a sermon of twenty pages was frequently placed on a page. The result is that in this volume a hundred and fifty students of Scripture—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists—combine to offer to their brethren suggestions as to the best practical uses to which the writings of Isaiah may be put to-day.

5. On pp. 447–496 are some valuable outlines obtained too late for insertion in their proper places. Three of them are interesting specimens of Welsh preaching.

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ERRATA.

Page 32, line 18 from the bottom : *for* "spontaneity" *read* "spirituality."
„ 130. The outline on this page should follow that concluded on page 122.
„ 214. *For* "Tyth" *read* "Lyth."
„ 343, line 25 from the bottom : after "longer," add "to hold intercourse with it."
„ 362. *For* "Magee" *read* "Magic."
„ 396. *For* "xxxvi." *read* "xxxiv."

ISAIAH.

INTRODUCTION.

OF ISAIAH, "the evangelical prophet," nothing is *known* beyond what we are told of him in the Scriptures. Various traditions concerning him are current among the Jews, such as that his father Amoz was brother of King Amaziah, and that he himself died a martyr's death, being sawn asunder by order of Manasseh; but all that is *certain* is, that he was the son of Amoz; that his prophetic ministry commenced in the reign of Uzziah, and closed in that of Hezekiah (ch. i. 1); that his wife was a prophetess (ch. viii. 3), and bare him two sons (ch. vii. 3; viii. 3); and that he was the author of a portion of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah (2 Chron. xxvi. 22).

His name signifies *The Salvation of the Lord*, and this—*the salvation which God works for His people from their sins and consequent misery*—is the great, though not the exclusive, theme of his prophecy.

The length of his ministry is variously estimated. The lowest estimate would make it comprise forty-nine years, from the last year of Uzziah to the seventeenth of Hezekiah (B.C. 759–710); the highest, sixty-four years, from the fourth year before Uzziah's death to the last year of Hezekiah (B.C. 762–698).

In the following Commentary it is assumed that the whole of the sixty-six chapters of which the Book of Isaiah is composed, were written by one pen. For clear and conclusive refutations of the theory of a second Isaiah, see the introductions to the Commentaries of Alexander, Delitsch, and Kay, and the article ISAIAH in Smith's, Kitto's, and Fairbairn's *Dictionaries of the Bible*.

Appended are Ewald's criticisms on Isaiah's style (α), and some admirable observations by Dr. Kay on the *title* of Isaiah's prophecy, which readers of it will do well to bear in mind throughout (β).

(α) In Isaiah we see prophetic authorship reaching its culminating point. Everything conspired to raise him to an elevation which no prophet before or after could as writer attain. Among the other prophets, each of the more important ones is distinguished by some one particular excellence, and some one peculiar talent. In Isaiah all kinds of talent, and all beauties of prophetic discourse, meet together, so as mutually to temper and qualify each other; it is not so much any single feature that distinguishes him as the symmetry and perfection of the whole.

We cannot fail to assume, as the first condition of Isaiah's peculiar historical greatness, a native power, and a vivacity of spirit which, even among prophets, is seldom to be met with. It is but rarely that we see combined in one and the same spirit the three several characteristics of—first, the most profound prophetic excitement and the purest sentiment; next, the most indefatigable and successful practical activity amidst all perplexities and changes of outward life; and, thirdly, that facility and beauty in representing thought which is the characteristic of the genuine poet; but this threefold combination we find realised in Isaiah as in no other prophet; and from the traces which we can perceive of the unceasing joint-working of

these three powers, we must draw our conclusions as to the original greatness of his genius. Both as prophet and as author, Isaiah stands upon that calm, sunny height, which in each several branch of ancient literature one eminently favoured spirit at the right time takes possession of; which seems, as it were, to have been waiting for *him;* and which, when he has come and mounted the ascent, seems to keep and guard him to the last as its own right man. In the sentiments which he expresses, in the topics of his discourses, and in the manner of expression, Isaiah uniformly reveals himself as the kingly prophet.

In reference to the last-named point, it cannot be said that his method of elaborating thought is elaborate and artificial: it rather shows a lofty simplicity and an unconcern about external attractiveness, abandoning itself freely to the leading and requirement of each several thought; but, nevertheless, it always rolls along in a full stream which overpowers all resistance, and never fails at the right place to accomplish at every turn its object without toil or effort.

The progress and development of the discourse is always majestic, achieving much with few words, which, though short, are yet clear and transparent; an overflowing fulness of thought, which might readily lose itself in the vast and indefinite, but which always at the right time with tight rein collects and tempers its exuberance; to the bottom exhausting the thought and completing the utterance, and yet never too diffuse. This severe self-control is the most admirably seen in those shorter utterances which by briefly-sketched images and thoughts give us the vague apprehension of something infinite, whilst, nevertheless, they stand before us complete in themselves and clearly delineated; *e.g.*, viii. 6—ix. 6, xiv. 29–32, xviii. 1–7, xxi. 11, 12; while in the long piece, xxviii.–xxxii., if the composition here and there for a moment languishes, it is only to lift itself up again afresh with all the greater might. In this rich and thickly-crowded fulness of thought and word it is but seldom that the simile which is employed appears apart, to set forth and complete itself (xxxi. 4, 5); in general, it crowds into the delineation of the object which it is meant to illustrate, and is swallowed up in it,—ay, and frequently simile after simile; and yet the many threads of the discourse, which for a moment appeared ravelled together, soon disentangle themselves into perfect clearness;—a characteristic which belongs to this prophet alone, a freedom of language which with no one else so easily succeeds.

The versification, in like manner, is always full, and yet strongly marked: while, however, this prophet is so little concerned about anxiously weighing out to each verse its proper number of words, not unfrequently he repeats the same word in two members (xxxi. 8, xxxii. 17, xi. 5, xix. 13), as if, with so much power and beauty in the matter within, he did not so much require a painstaking finish in the outside. The structure of the strophe is always easy and beautifully rounded.

Still the main point lies here,—that we cannot in the case of Isaiah, as in that of other prophets, specify any particular peculiarity, or any favourite colour as attaching to his general style. *He is not the especially lyrical prophet, or the especially elegiacal prophet, or the especially oratorical and hortatory prophet, as we should describe a Joel, a Hosea, a Micah, with whom there is a greater prevalence of some particular colour; but, just as the subject requires, he has readily at command every several kind of style and every several change of delineation; and it is precisely this that, in point of language, establishes his greatness, as well as in general, forms one of his most towering points of excellence.* His only fundamental peculiarity is the lofty, majestic calmness of his style, proceeding out of the perfect command which he feels he possesses over his subject-matter. This calmness, however, no way demands that the strain shall not, when occasion requires, be more vehemently excited, and assail the hearer with mightier blows; but even the extremest excitement, which does here and there intervene, is in the main bridled still by the same spirit of calmness, and, not overstepping the limits which that spirit assigns, it soon with lofty self-control returns to its wonted tone of equability (ii. 10—iii. 1, xxviii. 11–23, xxix. 9–14). Neither does this calmness in discourse require that the subject shall always be treated only in a plain level way, without any variation of form; rather, Isaiah shows himself master in just that variety of manner which suits the relation in which his hearers stand to the matter now in hand. If he wishes to bring home to their minds a distant truth which they like not to hear, and to judge them by a sentence pronounced by their own mouth, he retreats into a popular statement of a case drawn from ordinary life (v. 1–6, xxviii. 23–29). If he will draw the attention of the over-wise to some new truth, or to some future prospect, he surprises them by a brief oracle clothed in an enigmatical dress, leaving it to their penetration to discover its solution (vii. 14–16, xxix. 1–8). When the unhappy temper of the people's minds which nothing can amend leads to loud lamentation, his speech becomes for a while the strain of elegy and lament (i. 21–23, xxii. 4, 5). Do the frivolous leaders of the people mock? he outdoes them at their own weapons, and crushes them under the fearful earnest of divine mockery (xxviii. 10–13). Even a single ironical word in passing will drop from the lofty prophet (xxvii. 3, *glory*). Thus his discourse varies into every complexion: *it is tender and stern, didactic and threatening, mourning and again exulting in divine joy, mocking and earnest;* but ever at the right time it returns to its original elevation and repose, and never loses the clear ground-colour of its divine seriousness.—*Ewald, quoted in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. i. pp. 888, 889, article ISAIAH.

(β) The title of the book is "*The* VISION *of Isaiah*," which suggests these remarks—

(1.) Being a *vision*, it will frequently speak of events that are yet future, as if they had already occurred. So in iii. 8: "Jerusalem *is ruined*; Judah *is fallen*." In v. 13: "Therefore my people *are gone into captivity*."

(2.) What is seen in vision must be subject to the laws of *perspective*. One who views the snowy Alps from a distance may see two mountain peaks, which really are many miles apart, as one object. The illustration is imperfect; yet it may serve to explain how, to the eye of a seer, a nearer event may be blended with one that is *in the same direction, but vastly more remote*; the type, for instance, melting into the antitype, or the interval between the first and second advents of the Messiah being indiscernible.

(3.) It is, as a whole, *The Vision*;—*one* vision. It consists, indeed, of various parts; yet from the very outset these represent the same *vision*. Judah *is rebellious; is sentenced to exile; is redeemed; is purified. These elements, on a large scale, compose the book as a whole*; and, on a smaller scale, they compose the first chapter. The body is made up of portions similar in quality to itself, and to each other. The visions are greatly diversified in size, form, colouring, and other detail; but in essential characteristics it is one vision.—*Dr Kay, in The Speaker's Commentary*, vol. v. p. 19.

THE PROPHET OF THE LORD.

ver. 1. *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

I. **The nature of the prophet's endowment**: a "vision" into the very heart of things, a power of distinguishing between the seeming and the real. II. **The sadness and the joy of the prophet's life**: sadness arising from his "vision" of human sin (vers. 2–15); joy arising from his "vision" of the wondrousness of the Divine mercy (ver. 18).

Application.—1. In these latter days the prophetic endowment, to a greater or lesser extent, is possessed by all God's people (1 John ii. 20). 2. The Church should pray that it may be possessed to the fullest extent by all who are called to minister in holy things. Prophets of clear and penetrating "vision" are among the greatest gifts which God can confer upon the Church (α). 3. This great endowment must be used not merely for the detection and exposure of human sin, lest we become cynical and inhuman, but also for the discovery of the abounding evidence of the Divine compassion (as in v. 9), that we may be brought into more perfect sympathy with Him who hates sin but desires and seeks to save the sinner.

(α) A preacher who is not in some way a seer is not a preacher at all. You can never make people see religious realities by correct definitions. They will not believe in the reality of God on the word of a man who merely demonstrates it to them. You must see such things yourself if you are going to help others to see them. This is the secret of all the preaching that ever was good since preaching began.—*Beecher.*

PROPHECY THE VOICE OF GOD.

ver. 2. *The Lord hath spoken.*

Thus **at the very** outset of this book Divine authority is claimed for the utterances contained in it. Three views may be taken of the writings of the Hebrew prophets. 1. They are the writings of men who knew they were uttering that which is false when they claimed to be messengers of the Most High. 2. They are the writings of enthusiasts who mistook the ecstasies of their excited imaginations for Divine inspirations. 3. They are the writings of holy men who were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

Against the first of these views is to be set the fact that the whole influence of the prophets was exerted on behalf of national righteousness and individual virtue; that for these things they suffered; that for these

things some of them died. Is it credible that men who *so* sought to promote *such* ends would begin and continue their mission with a blasphemous lie?

Against the second is to be set the fact that many of their predictions have been fulfilled—fulfilled after intervals, so long, and with such minute accuracy, that sceptics have sought to account for such fulfilments by asserting that the prophecies were written subsequently to the events to which they refer; an assertion which the most competent scholars repel even with contempt.

There remains then only the third view; and in support of it may be urged—in addition to the *conclusive* fact just named—such considerations as these: 1. That their conceptions of God and of human duty are such as to satisfy the loftiest demands of the most enlightened reason and the best instructed conscience. Give examples (ch. xl. 12–26; lviii. 3–7, &c.) 2. That their conceptions of God and of human duty have not been surpassed by those of the sublimest poets or the ablest philosophers of any subsequent age. 3. That their sublime conceptions of God and of human duty, which still stand as the Alps or Himalaya of human thought, were given to the world in an age when, with the exception only of the prophets and those who accepted their teaching, the whole human race was given over to the most debasing idolatries and superstitions. 4. That the Hebrew prophets stood out in regard to these conceptions not only distinct from the men of their own age, but from the men of their own nation, from whom they had only words of rebuke, and against whose most cherished convictions and steadfast tendencies they set themselves in resolute opposition. Give examples (ch. i. 11–15; lxvi. 1, 2, &c.) If due weight be given to these considerations, we shall see that there is no escape from the conclusion that the Hebrew prophets owed their conceptions of God and duty to God Himself. They spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

If this be so, then—1. We should earnestly study the prophetic utterances. How mentally as well as morally debased is the man who is not alert and concerned to hear and understand what "the LORD hath spoken"! 2. Such of their utterances as are predictive should kindle within us confident and joyful hopes. They are the promises of Him who cannot lie, and who has ample power to perform. 3. To those which are preceptive we should give prompt, comprehensive, and careful obedience. To withhold such obedience, is to array against ourselves omnipotent power; to yield it, is to secure for ourselves eternal rewards (ch. iii. 10, 11).

An Appeal and an Argument.

i. 2, 3. *Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

I. **The unnaturalness of sin.** The heavens and the earth obey the laws to which they have been subjected; the very beasts are faithful to their instincts; it is only man who fails in duty and goes astray. II. **The baseness of ingratitude**: as displayed—1. By man to man (α); 2. By children to their parents (β); 3. By men to their Heavenly Father (γ). III. **The reasonableness of God's claim to our obedience and love.** 1. He is our Father (δ). 2. To all parental duties He has been faithful. 2. He has been more than faithful; He has caused our cup to run over with His lovingkindness (ϵ). IV. **Privilege is the measure of responsibility and the aggravation of guilt.** The point of the condemnation in these verses does not lie in the contrast be-

tween the conduct of animals and men, but in the contrast between the conduct of animals and that of God's people. "*Israel* doth not know, *my people* doth not consider!" This is the wonder and the monstrosity. That privilege is the measure of responsibility and the aggravation of guilt, is a very familiar truth; a truth often forgotten; and yet absolutely certain and tremendously important (Luke xii. 48; Heb. vi. 7, 8). What need *we* have to lay it to heart!

(α) All should unite to punish the ungrateful:
Ingratitude is treason to mankind.
—*Thomson.*

He that's ungrateful has no guilt but one;
All other crimes may pass for virtues in him.
—*Young.*

(β) Sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child.—*Shakespeare.*

(γ) An ungracious soul may be burdened with many sins; but she never makes up her full load till she hath added the sin of unthankfulness. He leaves out no evil in a man who calls him unthankful. Ingratitude dissolves the joints of the whole world. A barren ground is less blamed, because it hath not been dressed. But till it with the plough; trust it with seed; let the clouds bless it with their rain, the sun with his heat, the heavens with their influence, and then if it be unfertile, the condition is worse; before it was contemned, now it is cursed (Heb. vi. 8).—*Adams*, 1654.

Some are such brutes, that, like swine, their nose is nailed to the trough in which they feed; they have not the use of their understanding so far as to lift their eye to heaven, and say, "There dwells that God that provides this for me, that God by whom I live."—*Gurnall.*

You would count it a sad spectacle to behold a man in a lethargy, with his senses and reason so blasted by his disease that he knows not his nearest friends, and takes no notice of those that tend him, or bring his daily food to him. How many such senseless wretches are at this day lying upon God's hands! He ministers daily to their necessities, but they take no notice of His care and goodness.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

The frozen snake in the fable stingeth him that refreshed it. Thus is it with all unthankful men: God ladeth them daily with benefits and blessings, and they load Him with sins and trespasses.—*Stapleton*, 1535–1598.

(δ) It is an excellent representation of St Austin: if a sculptor, after his fashioning a piece of marble in a human figure, could inspire it with life and sense, and give it motion and understanding and speech, can it be imagined but the first act of it would be to prostrate itself at the feet of the maker in subjection and thankfulness, and to offer whatever it is, and can do, as homage to him? The almighty hand of God formed our bodies, He breathed into us the spirit of life, and should not the power of love constrain us to live wholly to His will?—*Bates*, 1625–1629.

(ε) We find the fiercest things that live,
The savage born, the wildly rude,
When soothed by Mercy's hand, will give
Some faint response of gratitude.

But man!—oh! blush, ye lordly race!—
Shrink back, and question thy proud heart!
Dost thou not lack that thankful grace
Which ever forms the soul's best part?

Wilt thou not take the blessings given,
The priceless boon of ruddy health,
The sleep unbroken, peace unriven,
The cup of joy, the mine of wealth?

Wilt thou not take them all, and yet
Walk from the cradle to the grave
Enjoying, boasting, and forget
To think upon the God that gave?

Thou'lt even kneel to blood-stained kings,
Nor fear to have thy serfdom known;
Thy knee will bend for bauble things,
Yet fail to seek its Maker's throne.
—*Eliza Cook.*

God's Indictment against Israel.

i. 2–6. *Hear, O heavens, &c.*

God sometimes speaks to man abruptly; when this is done, the truth expressed demands the most profound attention. In our text the heavens and the earth are suddenly called to attend to what is about to be said; God is charging the human race with fearful wrongs; the matter at issue is between creature and Creator, child and Parent. Our attention is called to—

I. The Fatherhood of God. "I have nourished," &c. Divine paternity is a truth which runs through the whole Bible, here and there shining out with resplendent lustre, as in our text. The fatherhood of God was manifested towards Israel—1. In *supply*. As it

affected the Jewish nation this declaration (I have nourished, &c.) pressed with tremendous force. Their supplies were marked by miracle, at least all the time they were in the wilderness; and the utterance has weight to-day. All nature is made to minister to man's necessities. 2. In *guardianship.* "Brought up children." This should have been sufficient to strike the ear as a thunderclap, seeing how far they had strayed from Him. Out of a mean, despised, and enslaved people He had developed a wealthy, mighty nation; and His guardianship reaches to all to-day. 3. In *defence.* The early history of these people was one unbroken chain of Divine interpositions. From the first day Moses stood before the king, until they were fully established in Palestine, God's arm was stretched out to defend them. The blood on the door-post, their sea-path, and the sea-grave of the Egyptians, together with the hovering cloud in the wilderness, all speak of strong defence; and still there are evidences of defence in the life of every man.

II. The wickedness of man. Men are universally the same; as the father so is the son, as the Jew so is the Gentile; and hence in this chapter we have a true picture of the whole human family. Let us mark some of the many features of guilt: 1. *Degeneracy.* God bears with weaknesses and infirmities, but wilful backsliding He abhors. The Jews were evil-doers; they went away from God and all that was good. It is the wilful sinning of men that now grieves Him. 2. *Insensibility.* Wrong-doing is sure to produce wrong feeling, or, what is worse, no feeling at all. A sinful life results in a dark heart. Here is a people more insensible of good bestowed than the stupid ox or more stupid ass; and there are still persons to be found less acquainted with the source of their supplies than the dumb, unconscious brute (α). 3. *Defiance.* They rebelled against God. Fear ceased to check them, and hatred led them to bold, defiant deeds. The day was to them as the night, and oppression and murder were but small sins to be indulged in. So it is with many to-day; they have no shame, remorse, or compunction for sin, openly defying the living God.

III. The purpose of Divine chastisement. No true parent finds any pleasure in chastising his children, and any pain inflicted without pure motives would be an evil. God corrects—1. *To restrain from sin.* This explains much that happened to the Israelites, and also much that transpires in the history of all men. God sees the danger, the leaning to wrong, and with Him prevention is better than cure (β). 2. *To show the consequences of sin.* Men profess to be practical, and wish to be practically dealt with; hence they say, "Words are not enough; there must be blows." The transgressor must feel as well as hear, or he will run mad. God has always taught men that His laws are more than mere word-rules; there is force in them, and he that breaks them must suffer. 3. *To bring to Himself* (γ). Hence we often hear Him say, "Why will ye be stricken any more?" Remonstrance always precedes the lash to show His love and tenderness.—*Charles Jupe.*

(α) The stall-fed ox, that is grown fat, will know
His careful feeder, and acknowledge too;
The generous spaniel loves his master's eye,
And licks his fingers though no meat be by:
But man, ungrateful man, that's born and bred
By Heaven's immediate power; maintained and fed
By His providing hand; observed, attended,
By His indulgent grace; preserved, defended,
By His prevailing arm; this man, I say,
Is more ungrateful, more obdure than they.
Man, O most ungrateful man, can ever
Enjoy Thy gift, but never mind the Giver;
And like the swine, though pampered with enough,
His eyes are never higher than the trough.
—*Francis Quarles.*

(β) The consequences of sin are meant to wean from sin. The penalty annexed to it is, in the first instance, corrective, not penal. Fire burns the child, to teach it one of the truths of this universe—the property of fire to burn. The first time it cuts its hand with a sharp knife, it has gained a lesson which it will never

forget. Now, in the case of pain, this experience is seldom, if ever, in vain. There is little chance of a child forgetting that fire will burn, and that sharp steel will cut; but the moral lessons contained in the penalties annexed to wrong-doing are just as truly intended to deter men from evil, though they are by no means so unerring in enforcing their application. The fever in the veins and the headache which succeed intoxication are meant to warn against excess. On the first occasion they are simply corrective; in every succeeding one they assume more and more a penal character, in proportion as the conscience carries with them the sense of ill-desert.—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(γ) If a sheep stray from his fellows, the shepherd sets his dog after it, not to devour it, but to bring it again: even so our Heavenly Shepherd, if any of us, His sheep, disobey Him, sets His dog of affliction after us, not to hurt us, but to bring us home to consideration of our duty towards Him.—*Cawdray.*

As the child, fearing nothing, is so fond of his play that he strays and wanders from his mother, not so much as thinking of her; but if he be scared or frighted with the sight or apprehension of some apparent or approaching danger, presently runs to her, casts himself into her arms, and cries out to be saved and shielded by her: so we, securely enjoying the childish sports of worldly prosperity, do so fondly dote on them that we scarce think of our Heavenly Father; but when perils and dangers approach, and are ready to seize upon us, then we flee to Him, and cast ourselves into the arms of His protection and providence, crying and calling to Him by earnest prayer for help and deliverance in this our extremity and distress.—*Downame*, 1644.

THOUGHTLESSNESS.

i. 3. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

It is clear from this chapter that the Lord views the sin of mankind with intense regret. Israel in this case is not so much a type of believers as a representative of sinners in general. The greatest difficulty in the world is to make men think. Consider—

I. **The common but serious fault here condemned.** Men are most inconsiderate—1. Towards God (α); 2. towards their own best interests (β); 3. towards the claims of justice and gratitude (γ).

II. **Some things that make the commonness of this fault surprising.** 1. Men live without consideration upon a matter in regard to which nothing but consideration will avail. Nothing can stand in lieu of thoughtfulness in religion. In regard to other matters we can employ others to think for us. But in this matter we must think for ourselves. Religion is a spiritual business, and if a man lives and dies refusing to consider, he has put away from him all hope of being saved; for grace comes not into us by mechanical process, but the Holy Spirit works upon the mind and soul. 2. This inconsideration is practised in regard to a subject the consideration of which would be abundantly remunerative, and would lead to the happiest results (δ).

III. **Some of the aggravations which attend it.** 1. It is fallen into by those of whom better things might reasonably have been expected. "*Israel* doth not know, *my people* doth not consider." It is not the heathen who act more stupidly than the brutes, but those whom God has called to Himself, on whom He has conferred light and knowledge, &c. 2. They have had their attention earnestly directed to the topics which they still neglect. 3. They have also been chastised, in the gracious endeavour to arouse them from their thoughtlessness. 4. Many of them are very zealous in regard to outward religion, as were those whom the prophet rebuked. 5. They have been most earnestly and affectionately invited to turn to God by gracious promises (such as ver. 18). 6. They have ability enough to consider other things.

IV. **Some of the secret causes of this widespread fault.** 1. In the case of many thoughtless persons we must lay the blame to the sheer *frivolity of their nature.* 2. In every case the bottom reason is *opposition to God Himself.* 3. Upon some minds the ten-

dency to *delay* operates fearfully. 4. Some make an excuse for themselves for not considering eternity, because *they are such eminently practical men.* They are living for realities of the nature of hard cash, and will not be induced to indulge in fancies and notions (ε). 5. Many are *prejudiced,* because some Christian professor has not lived up to his profession, or they have heard something which is said to be the doctrine of the gospel of which they cannot approve. 6. In most cases men *do not like to trouble themselves,* and they have an uncomfortable suspicion that if they were to look too narrowly into their affairs, they would find things far from healthy (ζ).—*C. H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit,* vol. xviii. pp. 373–384.

(α) One would pardon them if they forgot many minor things, and neglected many inferior persons; but to be inconsiderate to their Creator, to their Preserver, to Him in whose hand their everlasting destiny is placed, this is a strange folly as well as a great sin. Whoever a courtier may neglect, he is sure to consider his king. Men when they start their sons in business will bid them mind the main chance, and attend to the principal point, and especially take care to stand well with such a man who has the power to help or to ruin them. Men, as a general rule, are far too ready to seek the assistance of those who are in power, and this makes it all the more strange that the all-powerful God, who lifteth up and casteth down, should be altogether forgotten, or, where remembered, should still be dishonoured by mankind. If it were only because He is great, and we are so dependent upon Him, one would have thought that a rational man would have acquainted himself with God, and been at peace; but when we reflect that God is supremely good, kind, tender, and gracious, as well as great, the marvel of man's thoughtlessness is much increased. Every good man desires to be on good terms with the good; unusual goodness wins admiration, and an invitation to associate with the eminently excellent is usually accepted with pleasure; yet in the case of the thrice holy God, whose name is love, it is not so. All attractions are in the character of God, and yet man shuns his Maker. If God were a demon, man could hardly be more cold towards Him.—*Spurgeon.*

(β) When we ask men to attend to matters which do not concern them, we are not astonished if they plead that they have no time, and little thought to spare. If I were to address you upon a matter which affected the interests of the dwellers in the Dog-star, or had some relation to the inhabitants of the moon, I should not marvel if you were to say, "Go to those whom it may concern, and talk to them; but as for us, the matter is so remote that we take no interest in it." But how shall we account for it that man will not know about himself, and will not consider about his own soul? Any trifle will attract him, but he will not consider his own immortality, or meditate upon the joy or the misery that must be his portion. It is in very truth a miracle of human depravity—what if I say insanity—that man should be unmindful of his best self.—*Spurgeon.*

(γ) I have known men who have said, "Let the heavens fall, but let justice be done;" and they have scorned in their dealings with their fellow-men to take any unrighteous advantage, even though it were as little as the turning of a hair. I have known some also who, if they were called ungrateful, would indignantly spurn the charge. They would count themselves utterly loathsome if they did not return good to those who have done them good; and yet it may be these very same persons have been throughout life unjust towards God, and ungrateful towards Him to whom they owe their being, and all that makes it endurable. The service, the thankfulness, the love which are due to Him, they have withheld.—*Spurgeon.*

(δ) We should not marvel at men if they would not think upon topics which made them unhappy; but albeit there are some who have suffered frightful depression of spirits in connection with true religion, yet its general and ultimate fruit has ever been peace and joy through believing in Christ Jesus, and even the exceptions could be easily accounted for. In some melancholy spirits their godliness is too shallow to make them happy; they breathe so little of the heavenly air that they are distressed for want of more. In others the sorrow occasioned by gracious reflection is but a preliminary and passing stage of grace; there must be ploughing before there can be a harvest; there must be medicine for the disease before health returns, and the newly-awakened are just in the stage and the condition of drinking bitter medicine. This will soon be over, and the results will be most admirable. A great cloud of witnesses, among whom we joyfully take our place, bear witness to the fact that the ways of the Lord are ways of pleasantness. Our deepest joy lies now in knowing God, and considering Him.—*Spurgeon.*

(ε) I only wish that those who profess to be practical were more nearly so, for a practical man will always take more care of his body than of his coat, certainly; then should he not take more care of his soul than of the body, which is but the garment of it? If he were a truly practical man, he would do that. A

practical man will always consider matters in due proportion; he will not give all his mind to a cricket-match and neglect his business. And yet how often your practical man still more greatly errs; he devotes all his time to money-making, and not a minute to the salvation of his soul, and its preparation for eternity! Is this practical? Why, sir, Bedlam itself is guilty of no worse madness than that! There is not in all your wards a single maniac who commits a more manifest act of insanity than a man who spends all his force upon this fleeting life, and lets the eternal future go by the board.—*Spurgeon.*

(δ) They are like the bankrupt before the court the other day who did not keep books. Not he. He did not know how his affairs stood, and, moreover, he did not want to know; he did not like his books, and his books did not like him. He was going to the bad, and he therefore tried to forget it. They say of the silly ostrich that when she hides her head in the sand, and does not see her pursuers, she thinks she is safe; that is the policy of many men. They spread their sails, and get up the steam, and go with double speed straight ahead. What, not look at the chart! No, they do not want to know whether there are rocks and breakers ahead. Arrest that captain, put him in irons, and find a sane man to take charge of the vessel. Oh for grace to arrest that folly which is the captain of your bark, and put sound sense in command, or else a spiritual shipwreck is certain.—*Spurgeon.*

INCONSIDERATENESS.

i. 3. *My people doth not consider.*

I. Inconsiderateness is one of the commonest of all human characteristics (α). II. While apparently a comparatively harmless thing, it is the source of nearly all the evils by which man is afflicted, and of the sins by which God is grieved and made angry. —1. "Presumptuous sins" are comparatively rare. 2. Look at some of the evils to which a want of consideration leads in the various spheres of life: educational, domestic, social, commercial, political, religious (β).

APPLICATION.—1. *Cultivate the habit of considering the issues of various courses of conduct.* We should regard our thoughts, words, and actions as the farmer regards his seeds—as the germs of a future harvest; and we should remember that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This will lead to a wise caution in regard to the seeds we sow. 2. *Consider the relations in which you now stand to Almighty God.* You *must* be either a rebel, exposed to His vengeance, or a pardoned child, shielded by His love. Which is it?

(α) Silly man is like the foolish chickens; though the kite comes and takes away many of their fellows, yet the rest continue pecking the ground, never heeding their owner, never minding their shelter. Death comes and snatches away one man here, a second there; one before them, another behind them, and they are killed by death, undone for ever; yet they who survive take no warning, but persist in their wicked, ungodly ways (Job iv. 20, 21).—*Swinnock*, 1673.

A plough is coming from the far end of a long field, and a daisy stands nodding, and full of dew-dimples. That furrow is sure to strike the daisy. It casts its shadow as gaily, and exhales its gentle breath as freely, and stands as simple and radiant and expectant as ever; and yet that crushing furrow, which is turning and turning others in its course, is drawing near, and in a moment it whirls the heedless flower with sudden reversal under the sod! And as is the daisy, with no power of thought, so are ten thousand thinking sentient flowers of life, blossoming in places of peril, and yet thinking that no furrow of disaster is running in toward them—that no iron plough of trouble is about to overturn them. Sometimes it dimly dawns upon us, when we see other men's mischiefs and wrongs, that we are in the same category with them, and that perhaps the storms which have overtaken them will overtake us also. But it is only for a moment, for we are artful to cover the ear, and not listen to the voice that warns us of danger.—*Beecher.*

(β) The wounds I might have healed!
The human sorrow and smart!
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part:
But *evil is wrought by want of thought,*
As well as want of heart!
—*Hood.*

THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED.

I. 3. *My people doth not consider.*

The universe is regulated by fixed laws, by which God preserves and governs all things. Man is endowed with rational powers, intellectual faculties, capable of apprehending these laws, whether they become known to him by revelation or by his own discoveries, and of using them as his guides. His well-being depends upon his harmony with them, and his dignity and bliss on the right application of his mental powers. One of Satan's main stratagems is to endeavour to hinder him from using them aright; to induce him to act without forethought or reflection, and to incite him to act merely on impulse, feeling, or passion (α). As a result of these artifices, the great mass of mankind live without thought, and are borne in stupid insensibility to the eternal world. Thus God complains of the infatuation of Israel, "My people doth not consider." To consider is to think deliberately, to reflect maturely. There are many subjects to which our consideration should be attentively and diligently given. We should consider —I. The character and will of God. His *works* should lead us to this. If you see a beautiful picture, or piece of sculpture or mechanism, you naturally direct your thoughts to the artist or mechanist who has produced it. The grandeur of the divine works surrounds you, and ought you not to consider the wondrous Architect of the whole? His *relationship to you* should induce it. Your existence is derived from Him, and He fashioned you, and bestowed on you all your endowments. He is your Father, your bountiful Preserver. Besides, you are ever in His hand, ever before His eyes, He surrounds you. And He is great, wise, powerful, holy, and just. His love and favour are heaven; His anger and frowns are hell. II. Ourselves. What are we? What our powers? our capabilities? our end and destination? the claims of God? our duties to others? the improvement we should make of the present? the preparation we should make for the future? Are we answering the end of our being? &c. III. Our spiritual state before God. Is it one of ignorance, or of knowledge? folly, or wisdom? guilt, or pardon? condemnation or acceptance? alienation, or sonship and adoption? safety, or imminent peril? Are we heirs of wrath or perdition, or of God and salvation? IV. The importance of life. Life is the seedtime for eternity, the period of probation, the only opportunity of securing eternal blessedness. How short it is, how fragile, how uncertain! How criminal to waste it, to pervert it! &c. V. The solemnities of death (Deut. xxxii. 29). Consider its certainty, its probable nearness, its truly awful character. Try to realise it. Consider if you were now dying, &c. (β). VI. The great concerns of eternity. The judgment-day. Heaven, with its eternal glories; hell, with its everlasting horrors. Eternity itself, how solemn, how overwhelming! How blissful to the saint! how terrific to the sinner! ETERNITY! VII. That salvation which will fit us for living, dying, and for eternity. Provided by the mercy of God, obtained by the Lord Jesus Christ, revealed in the gospel, offered to every sinner, received by simple faith, and which delivers from guilt, pollution, fear, and everlasting wrath. VIII. Our present duty and interest. Men are supposed to care naturally for these. But their care usually relates merely to the body, and the things of time. Consider whether it is not your *duty* to obey and serve God; whether it is not your *interest* (1 Tim. iv. 8). IX. That there is no substitute for religion (Jer. ii. 13).

Application. — Urge consideration upon all present. 1. *Some have never considered.* Now begin. Retire

and reflect; weigh and consider these things. 2. *Some have considered occasionally*—in church, or when sick, in the house of bereavement, &c. Cultivate the *habit* of consideration (γ), and carry into effect the conclusions to which you will inevitably come. 3. *There is hope for all who will consider.* 4. *They are hopeless who will not consider* (δ).—*Jabez Burns, D.D., Pulpit Cyclopædia*, vol. ii. pp. 34–37.

(α) Satan doth his utmost, that sinners may not have any serious thoughts of the miserable state they are in while they are under his rule, or hear of anything from others which might the least unsettle their minds from his service. Consideration, he knows, is the first step to repentance. He that doth not consider his ways what they are, and whither they lead him, is not likely to change them in haste. Israel stirred not until Moses came, and had some discourse with them about their woful slavery and the gracious thoughts of God towards them, and then they begin to desire to be gone. Pharaoh soon bethought him what consequence might follow upon this, and cunningly labours to prevent it by doubling their task. "Ye are idle, ye are idle, therefore ye say, Let us go, and do sacrifice unto the Lord. Go therefore and work." Thus Satan is very jealous of the sinner, afraid every Christian that speaks to him, or ordinance that he hears, will inveigle him. By his good-will he should come at neither; no, nor have a thought of heaven or hell from one end of the week to the other, and that he may have as few as may be, he keeps him full-handed with work. The sinner grinds, and he is filling the hopper that the mill may not stand still. Ah, poor wretch! was ever slave so looked to? As long as the devil can keep thee thus, thou art his own sure enough. The prodigal "came to himself" before he came to his father. He considered with himself what a starving condition he was in; his husks were poor meat, and yet he had not enough of them; and how easily he might mend his commons if he had but grace to go home and humble himself to his father! Now, and not till now, he goes.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(β) The sand of life
Ebbs fastly to its finish. Yet a little,
And the last fleeting particle will fall
Silent, unseen, unnoticed, unlamented.
Come, then, sad thought, and let us meditate,
While meditate we may. We have now
But a small portion of what men call time
To hold communion.—*H. K. White.*

(γ) He sat within a silent cave, apart
From men, upon a chair of diamond stone;
Words he had not, companions he had none,
But steadfastly pursued his thoughtful art;
And as he mused he pulled a slender string
Which evermore within his hand he held;
And the dim curtain rose which had concealed
His thoughts, the city of the immortal king:
There, pictured in its solemn pomp, it lay
A glorious country stretching round about,
And through its golden gates passed in and out
Men of all nations, on their heavenly way.
On this he mused, and mused the whole day long,
Feeding his feeble faith till it grew strong.
—*George Croly.*

(δ) No man is in so much danger as he who thinks there is no danger. Why, when the bell rings, when the watchmen rends the air with cries of "Fire! *Fire!* FIRE!" when in every direction there is the pattering of feet on the sidewalk, and when the engines come rattling up to the burning house, one after another the inmates are awakened, and they rush out; and they are safest that are most terrified, and that suffer most from a sense of danger. One only remains behind. He hears the tumult, but it weaves itself into the shape of dreams, and he seems to be listening to some parade, and soon the sounds begin to be indistinct in his ear, and at length they cease to make any impression upon him. During all this time he is inhaling the deadly gas with which his apartment has become filled, gradually his senses are benumbed, and finally he is rendered unconscious by suffocation. And, in the midst of peril, and the thunder of excitement, that man who is the least awake, and the least frightened, is the very man that is the most likely to be burned up.—*Beecher.*

RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATION.

I. 3. *My people doth not consider.*

In a former discourse we noticed that one of Satan's chief devices was to keep men from consideration, and we referred to a variety of subjects upon which it is important that we should reflect. We now call your attention to *the true character of religious consideration.*

I. It should be serious and earnest. The subjects are too solemn and

weighty to be hastily dismissed. It must not be a mere cursory survey, a rapid glance at these great concerns, but a careful, deliberate contemplation of them; just as a prisoner about to be tried for a capital offence would consider his defence, or a wrecked mariner how he shall escape a watery grave, or a traveller how to accomplish some momentous journey or voyage. If it be done lightly and hastily, it will not profit us or please God. II. It should be prayerful. The exercise will be irksome to the natural heart. We shall be disposed to give it up, or do it slightingly. The grace of God alone can give the spirit necessary for the right discharge of it. Therefore begin, continue, and follow it out with prayer. III. It should be pursued in connection with a diligent use of the public means of grace. Hearken to the Divine Word as it is read in the sanctuary, and to the preaching of the gospel, Christian conversation, &c. Consideration will not profit us if God's means and ordinances are neglected. All are needful to the soul, as wind, sun, rain, and dew are all needful to the ripening of fruit. IV. It should be continued and persevering. Not too much to devote a portion of every day to it. The first and last moments would be thus profitably exercised (α), *and it must be followed out* (β).

In conclusion, notice some reasons why you should consider. 1. *Because you have powers to do so.* God made you for this end, that you should consider. In neglecting this, you despise your own souls, you sink to below the level of the brute creation. They do answer the end of their existence, and obey their several instincts. "The ox knoweth his owner." Nearly every creature disposes of its time and means wisely; but an inconsiderate man defaces the faculties within him. 2. *Because it is your duty.* God enjoins it—He urges, expostulates. To neglect it is, therefore, to despise God and rebel against Him. 3. *It is essential to the possession of true religion.* Various are the ways in which God brings men to Himself; by a variety of instruments and means, but none without consideration. Manasseh in prison—Jonah in the belly of the whale—the prodigal in his misery, &c. It is the first great step towards saving religion. 4. *By prudent men, it is never neglected in worldly things.* In entering upon any contract, in buying and selling, in all business engagements, in all secular pursuits. We consider, in reference to the body, our houses, food, and raiment, our families, &c. Are the soul's eternal concerns the only things not deserving of it? 5. *God may compel you to consider.* By bereaving you of the dearest objects of your hearts, by afflicting your bodies, by embittering all earthly good. Is it not better to avoid these corrections, sorrows, and griefs? 6. *You may consider when it is too late.* Perhaps on the verge of eternity, if not in eternity itself. The foolish virgins considered when the cry was heard; the rich man considered too late; the wicked will consider in the great day of Christ's wrath, when they cry to the rocks and hills, &c. The consideration of the lost in eternity will be in vain—will be bitter beyond description—will be everlasting, and as horrible as it is durable. Therefore consider *now*, while consideration may yet profit you.—*Jabez Burns, D.D., Pulpit Cyclopædia*, vol. ii. pp. 37–39.

(α) Make up your spiritual accounts daily; see how matters stand between God and your souls (Ps. lxxvii. 6). Often reckonings keep God and conscience friends. Do with your heart as you do with your watch—wind it up every morning by prayer, and at night examine whether it has gone true all that day, whether the wheels of your affections have moved swiftly toward heaven. Oh call yourself often to account; keep your reckonings even, and that is the way to keep your peace.—*Watson*, 1696.

(β) The end of all arts and sciences is the practice of them. And as this is to be confessed in all other arts, so it cannot be denied in divinity and religion, the practice whereof doth in excellency surmount the knowledge and theory, as being the main end whereunto it tends. For to what purpose do men spend their spirits and tire their wits in discerning the light of truth, if they do not use the benefit of it to direct them in all their ways? (Ps. cxix. 59.)—*Downame*, 1642.

Iniquity a Burden.

i. 4. *A people laden with iniquity.*

A very surprising description: "A people laden with *iniquity*." On account of their punctilious and costly observance of the Mosaic ritual (see vers. 11–15), the Jews imagined that they deserved the commendation of Heaven; but God pronounced them to be "a people laden with iniquity." *Men* often form very different estimates of the same thing; *e.g.*, buyer and seller (Prov. xx. 14). There is often as marked a difference between the divine and human estimates of character (Luke xviii. 11; Rev. iii. 17). This is so because God and men judge by different standards; men take into account only their occasional good actions; God judges by that feature of their character which is predominant (α). So judging, He condemned those most "religious" Jews. What is His estimate of *us?*

A very instructive description: "A people *laden* with iniquity." The conception is that of a nation that has gone on adding sin to sin, as a man gathering sticks in the forest adds fagot to fagot, until he staggers beneath the load; that which was eagerly sought after becomes an oppressive burden. How true this is! There are many national burdens; despotism, an incapable government, excessive taxation, &c., but the worst and most oppressive of all is a nation's iniquities.

The iniquities of a nation constitute a burden that impede it—1. *In its pursuit of material prosperity.* With what desperate intensity this English nation toils! and for what end? Chiefly that it may accumulate wealth. How greatly it is impeded in this pursuit by its costly government! But how much more by its costly vices! On strong drink alone this nation expends a larger sum than the whole amount both of imperial and local taxation—more than one hundred millions annually! Other vices that are nameless, how much they cost, and what a hindrance they are to the nation in its pursuit of wealth! 2. *In its pursuit of social happiness.* What a crushing burden of sorrow the nation's iniquities impose upon it! 3. *In its pursuit of moral and intellectual improvement.* According to a monkish legend, the church of St. Brannock's, in Braunton, Devon, could not be erected on its original site, because as fast as the builders reared up the walls by day, by night the stones were carried away by invisible hands. A like contest goes on in our own land. The nation's virtues are toiling to elevate the national character morally and intellectually, using as their instruments the school, the church, the press; but as fast as the virtues build, the vices pull down. In all these respects the nation's iniquities constitute its heaviest burden.

Consequently, 1. To give a legal sanction to vices, or to connive at what promotes them, for the sake of certain additions to the national revenues, is suicidal folly of the grossest kind. 2. Those are the truest national benefactors who do most to abate the national iniquities. The palm for truest patriotism must be awarded, not to "active politicians," but to faithful preachers, Sunday-school teachers, temperance reformers, &c. 3. Vices of all kinds should be branded, not only as sins against God, but as treasons against society; and all good men should, in self-defence, as well as in a spirit of enlightened patriotism, band themselves together for their overthrow. That is a mistaken spirituality which leads some good men to leave imperial and local affairs in the hands of the worldly and the vicious. We are bound to labour as well as to pray that God's will may be done "on earth as it is in heaven," and that "His kingdom" may come in our own land (β).

That which is true of nations is

true also of individuals; the heaviest burdens which men can take upon themselves are vices. Vices lay upon men a burden—1. *Of expense.* Even so-called "indulgences" are costly; many professing Christians spend more annually on tobacco than they give to the cause of missions. Vices keep millions poor all their lives (γ). 2. *Of discredit.* 3. *Of sorrow*, clouding all the present. 4. *Of fear*, darkening all the future.

There is this terrific feature about the burden of iniquity—there is none so hard to be got rid of. It is hard to inspire a nation or a man with the desire to get rid of it. How nations and men hug their vices, notwithstanding the miseries they entail! It is still harder to accomplish the desire! Society is full of men who stagger and groan under this burden, from which they strive in vain to free themselves. In them the fable of Sinbad, unable to rid himself of the old man whom he has taken upon his shoulders, has a melancholy realisation. These men feel themselves to be helpless, and their case would indeed be hopeless were it not that God has laid help for us on One who is mighty to save. Cry to Him, ye burdened ones, and obtain release!

(α) Men are to be estimated, as Johnson says, by the mass of character. A block of tin may have a grain of silver, but still it is tin; and a block of silver may have an alloy of tin, but still it is silver. The mass of Elijah's character was excellence; yet he was not without the alloy. The mass of Jehu's character was base; yet he had a portion of zeal which was directed by God to great ends.—*Cecil.*

(β) As Christians are to think of living for awhile in the world, it is not unreasonable for them to be affected with its occurrences and changes. Some plead for a kind of abstracted and sublimated devotion, which the circumstances they are placed in by their Creator render equally impracticable and absurd. They are never to notice the affairs of government, or the measures of administration; war, or peace; liberty, or slavery; plenty, or scarcity,—all is to be equally indifferent to them; they are to leave these carnal and worldly things to others. But have they not bodies? Have they not families? Is religion founded on the ruins of humanity? When a man becomes a Christian, does he cease to be a member of civil society? Allowing that he be not the owner of the ship, but only a passenger in it, has he nothing to awaken his concern in the voyage? If he be only a traveller towards a better country, is he to be told that because he is at an inn which he is soon to leave, it should not excite any emotion in him whether it be invaded by robbers or consumed by flames before the morning? In the peace thereof ye shall have peace: and are not Christians to provide things honest in the sight of all men? Are they to detach themselves while here from the interests of their fellow-creatures; or to rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep? Is not religion variously affected by public transactions? Can a Christian, for instance, be indifferent to the cause of freedom, even on a pious principle? Does not civil liberty necessarily include religious? and is it not necessary to the exertions of ministers, and the spreading of the gospel?—*Jay.*

(γ) "What are you going to take that for?" said an old labourer to a young one who was about to drink a glass of ale. "To make me work," was the reply. "Yes," answered the old man, "you are right; that is just what it will do for a certainty: I began to drink ale when I was about your age, and it has made me work until now!"

Transmitted Depravity.

I. 4. *A seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters.*

Transmitted depravity is—I. A doctrine of Scripture. II. A fact in human life (α). *Application.*—1. God will not fail to make allowance for it in dealing with us. 2. We should make allowance for it in judging our fellow-men. Our censures should be mingled with compassion. 3. By self-restraint and a life of virtue we should endeavour as far as is possible to cut off from our children this sad entail. A bias towards good may be transmitted as well as a bias towards evil (β). 4. In the *education* of our children, we should be especially solicitous to check and prevent the development of the faults we have transmitted to them, that so, though they are "a seed of evil-doers," they may not themselves be "corrupters."

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(α) As colour and favour, and proportion of hair and face and lineament, and as diseases and infirmities of the body, so, commonly, the liabilities and dispositions and tempers of the mind and affections become hereditary, and run in the blood. An evil bird hatches an evil egg, and one viper will breed a generation of vipers. Most sins pass along from the father to the son, and so downward, by a kind of lineal descent, from predecessors to posterity, and that for the most part with advantage and increase, whole families being tainted with the special vices of their stock. John the Baptist speaks of "a generation of vipers;" and if we should but observe the condition of some families in a long line of succession, might we not espy here and there even whole generations of drunkards, and generations of swearers, and generations of idolaters, and generations of worldlings, and generations of seditious, and of envious, and of riotous, and of haughty, and of unclean persons, and of sinners in other kinds.—*Sanderson*, 1587–1662.

Original or birth sin is not merely a doctrine in religion, it is a fact in man's world acknowledged by all, whether religious or not. Let a man be providing for an unborn child: in case of distribution of worldly property, he will take care to bind him by conditions and covenants which shall guard against his fraudulently helping himself to that which he is to hold for or to apportion to another. He never saw that child; he does not know but that child may be the most pure and perfect of men; but he knows it will not be safe to put temptation in his way, because he knows he will be born in sin, and liable to sin, and sure to commit sin.—*Alford*, 1810–1871.

(β) Where children are the children of Christian parents, as *they* were children of Christian parents, the presumptions are that they will turn out right; not without parental training, but, that being implied, the presumptions are that they will, by the force of natural law, tend in that direction. All the presumptions are that the children of moral and sensible parents will become moral and sensible. Only the grossest neglect and the most culpable exposure to temptation will overrule the presumption and likelihood that the children of good parents will be good. There may be opposing influences; there may be temptations and perversions that shall interrupt the natural course of things; but this does not invalidate the truth that there is a great law by which like produces like. And I say that under this law the Christian parent has a right to this comforting presumption—"My children have all the chances in their favour by reason of the moral constitution which they have inherited."

I know multitudes of families in which the moral element is hereditary; and it is not surprising that the children of those families are moral. Moral qualities are as transmissible as mental traits or physical traits. The same principle applies to every part of the human constitution. And where families have been from generation to generation God-fearing, passion-restraining, truth-telling, and conscience-obeying, the chances are ninety-nine in every hundred in favour of the children.—*Beecher.*

Forsaking the Lord.

I. 4. *They have forsaken the Lord.*

How many souls are guilty of forsaking the Lord? They forsake Him by yielding to what are called "little sins" (α). Then they are further removed from Him by habitual wickedness.

I. This conduct is surprising. Is it not most surprising that men should forsake the great God, their Creator and Benefactor? He is all-powerful. He is all-wise. He is all-loving. The soul cannot have a better helper in difficulty, or a truer and wiser friend in sorrow. From the Godward aspect of the case nothing is more surprising than that man should forsake God; but from the manward aspect of things this is not surprising, for man is carnal, and the carnal mind is enmity against God. Satan draws the soul from God. It chases a phantom into the great darkness, and finds in the end that it has wandered from the Infinite Being.

II. This conduct is criminal. We should esteem it criminal to forsake a parent, to forsake a benefactor, to forsake a master. But this offence is small compared with that of the soul when it wanders from the Lord. It exhibits *insubordination*. It rejects the Supreme Moral Ruler of the universe. It exhibits *ingratitude*. It forsakes its Redeemer. It exhibits *folly*, for away from Christ the soul cannot obtain true rest.

III. This conduct is inexcusable. The soul can give no true reason, or valid excuse, for such unholy conduct.

The Lord has dealt bountifully with it, and therefore it has no ground of complaint. He is attractive in character. He is winning in disposition. He is kindly in the discipline of life. He gives holy influences to draw the soul to Himself. Hence man has no excuse for forsaking God.

IV. This conduct is common. The world of humanity has forsaken God. One by one souls are returning, and are being welcomed to Christ and to heaven. Many agencies are at work for the return of souls to the heavenly kingdom. Let us seek to make them efficient. Let us pray that they may be successful. Have you forsaken God?—*J. S. Exell.*

(α) There is many a man who evinces, for a time, a steadfast attention to religion, walking with all care in the path of God's commandments, &c., but who, after awhile, declines from spirituality, and is dead, though he may yet have a name to live. But how does it commonly happen that such a man falls away from the struggle for salvation? Is it ordinarily through some one powerful and undisguised assault that he is turned from the faith, or over one huge obstacle that he falls not to rise again? Not so. It is almost invariably through little things. He fails to take notice of little things, and they accumulate into great. He allows himself in little things, and thus forms a strong habit. He relaxes in little things, and thus in time loosens every bond. Because it is a little thing, he counts it of little moment, utterly forgetting that millions are made up of units, that immensity is constituted of atoms. Because it is only a stone, a pebble, against which his foot strikes, he makes light of the hindrance; not caring that he is contracting a habit of stumbling, or of observing that whenever he trips there must be some diminution in the speed with which he runs the way of God's commandments, and that, however slowly, these diminutions are certainly bringing him to a stand.

The astronomer tells us, that, because they move in a resisting medium, which perhaps in a million of years destroys the millionth part of their velocity, the heavenly bodies will at length cease from their mighty march. May not, then, the theologian assure us that little roughnesses in the way, each retarding us, though in an imperceptible degree, will eventually destroy the onward movement, however vigorous and direct it may at one time have seemed? Would to God that we could persuade you of the peril of little offences! We are not half as much afraid of your hurting the head against a rock, as of your hurting the foot against a stone. There is a sort of continued attrition, resulting from our necessary intercourse with the world, which of itself deadens the movements of the soul; there is, moreover, a continued temptation to yield in little points, under the notion of conciliating; to indulge in little things, to forego little strictnesses, to omit little duties; and all with the idea that what looks so light cannot be of real moment. And by these littles, thousands, tens of thousands, perish. If they do not come actually and openly to a stand, they stumble and stumble on, getting more and more careless, nearer and nearer to indifference, lowering the Christian standards, suffering religion to be peeled away by inches, persuading themselves that they can spare without injury such inconsiderable bits, and not perceiving that in stripping the bark they stop the sap.—*Melvill.*

Moral Obduracy.

i. 5. *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.*

I. The danger of despising the Divine chastisements. Heedlessness destroys the very power of taking heed. II. The terribleness of the peace which is often the portion of the wicked. Like the cessation of pain in a sick man, which indicates that mortification has set in, it may be only a sign that God has given them up as irreclaimable (Hos. iv. 17) (α). III. The folly of expecting sanctification as the inevitable result of suffering. Contrary to the expectation of the Universalists, the sufferings of the lost may only confirm them in their impenitence (Rev. i. 9, 11, 21) (β).

(α) While God visits us at all, it is a sign He thinks of us. The present life is not the time for punishment devoid of mercy. While the debtor is on his way to prison, he may agree with his adversary, and escape the messenger's hands. While the sick man feels pain, there is vitality and activity in his constitution, and he may recover. And therefore I think it must be a terrible thing to have one's perdition sealed; to have the process already closed, both depositions and sentence, and laid up in God's chancery, as an irreversible doom, and so him who is its object troubled no further, but allowed the full choice of his pleasures,—as one permits to a man, between sentence and execution, his choice of viands, in full certainty that when his hour hath tolled the terrible law will take its course. How smoothly glides along the boat upon the wide, unruffled, though most rapid stream that hurries it onward to

the precipice, over which its waters break in thunder! How calm, and undisturbed by the smallest ripple, slumbers its unreflecting steersman! Oh for one rock in the midst of its too smooth channel, against which it may be dashed and whirled about, to shake him from this infatuated sleep! It is the only hope that remains for him. Woe to him if to the end his course be pleasant! That end will pay it all!—*Wiseman.*

(β) Afflictions leave the wicked worse, more impenitent, hardened in sin, and outrageous in their wicked practices. Every plague on Egypt added to the plague of hardness on Pharaoh's heart; he that for some while could beg prayers of Moses for himself, at last comes to that pass that he threatens to kill him if he come to him any more. Oh, what a prodigious height do we see some come to in sin after some great sickness or other judgment! Oh, how greedy and ravenous are they after their prey, when once they get off their clog and chain from their heels! When physic works not kindly, it doth not only leave the disease uncured, but the poison of the physic lays in the body also. Many appear thus poisoned by their afflictions.—*Gurnall,* 1617–1679.

Trust not in any unsanctified afflictions, as if these could permanently and really change the condition of your heart. I have seen the characters of the writing which the flames had turned into a film of buoyant coal; I have seen the thread which has been passed through the fire retain, in its cold grey ashes, the twist it had got in spinning; I have found every shivered splinter of the flint as hard as the unbroken stone: and let trials come, in providence, sharp as the fire and ponderous as the crushing hammer, unless a gracious God send along with these something else than these, bruised, broken, bleeding as thy heart may be, its nature remains the same.—*Guthrie.*

Needless Stripes.

i. 5. *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.*

That sin should not go unpunished is a law of our own hearts, and it is a law of God. Punishment is intended to be remedial (α); but remedies that are intended to cure sometimes irritate, and God's remedies may act in two ways—they may make a man better, or they may make him worse (β). There are those who "kick against the pricks," and as the result of afflictions which their own sins have brought upon them, become desperate. Chastisement is then of no further use, and like a father weary of correcting the child who has proved irreformable, God may say, "Why should," &c. (Hos. iv. 17). Terrible meaning, then, may lurk in these words: they may speak of that stage in the sinner's career when his moral malady has become incurable, when the Good Physician feels that His severest and most searching remedies are of no avail, when God withholds His hand, and says, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still" (γ). So some have understood these words.

But a more gracious meaning may be contained in them; they may be the first note of that tender divine invitation which is fully expressed in ver. 18. For mark, God begins here to reason with men,—bids them look at themselves, their situation, the fatal folly of sinning when sin brings its own sure punishment. What need of these disasters? Note: the first aim of the gospel is to make the sinner understand that sin and its torments are alike of his own seeking; repentance cannot come until he feels this.

These words may then be regarded as implying—**I. That there is no inherent necessity that sinners should continue to be stricken.** 1. There is no reason *in the nature of God* (Ezek. xviii. 23). God is love. Love may ordain laws for the general security and safety, the breaking of which may be attended with terrible consequences; but yet God has no delight when these consequences overwhelm the transgressor. He pities even while He punishes, and is on the outlook for the very first beginnings of penitence, that He may stay His hand (δ). 2. There is no reason *in the nature of man.* As man is not impelled by any inherent necessity to sin, but in every sin acts by deliberate choice, so neither is he compelled to repeat his transgressions. Even when he has done wrong, his consciousness testifies that he might have done right, and it is precisely on this account that his conscience condemns him!

II. That a way of avoiding the merited punishment is open. We know what that way is. The prophet saw it afar off, and rejoiced (ver. 18; ch. liii. 5, 6). "Why should ye be stricken any more," when Christ has been stricken for you? The way of reconciliation is open: avail yourselves of it with penitence, with thankful joy!—But if men despise the offered grace, let them know that when the doom from which they *would not* be delivered comes crashing down upon them, they will neither have nor merit any pity. Even the Angel of Mercy will answer them, "Ye have destroyed yourselves!" —*W. Baxendale.*

(α) When Almighty God, for the merits of His Son, not of any ireful mind, but of a loving heart towards us, doth correct and punish us, He may be likened unto a father; as the natural father first teacheth his dear beloved child, and afterwards giveth him warning, and then correcteth him at last, even so the Eternal God assayeth all manner of ways with us. First He teacheth us His will through the preaching of His Word, and giveth us warning. Now if so be that we will not follow Him, then He beateth us a little with a rod, with poverty, sickness, or with other afflictions, which should be esteemed as nothing else but children's rods, or the wands of correction. If such a rod will not do any good, and his son waxeth stubborn, then taketh the father a whip or a stick, and beateth him till his bones crack; even so, when we wax obstinate, and care neither for words nor stripes, then sendeth God unto us more heavy and universal plagues. All this He doth to drive us unto repentance and amendment of our lives. Now truth it is, that it is against the father's will to strike his child; he would much rather do him all the good that ever he could. Even so certainly, when God sendeth affliction upon our necks, there lieth hidden under that rod a fatherly affection. For the peculiar and natural property of God is to be loving and friendly, to heal, to help, and to do good to His children, mankind.—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

The surgeon must cut away the rotten and dead flesh, that the whole body be not poisoned, and so perish; even so doth God sometimes plague our bodies grievously, that our souls may be preserved and healed. How deep soever God thrusteth His iron into our flesh, He doeth it only to heal us; and if it be so that He kill us, then will He bring us to the right life. The physician employeth one poison to drive out another; even so God in correcting us useth the devil and wicked people, but yet all to do us good.—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(β) Sorrow is in itself a thing neither good nor bad; its value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life, or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hothouse, a great power also in the coffin; it expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigour to vegetable life; and warmth, too, develops with tenfold rapidity the weltering process of dissolution. So, too, with sorrow. There are spirits in which it develops the seminal principle of life; there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay.—*F. W. Robertson.*

(γ) As long as the physician hath any hope of the recovery of his patient, he assayeth all manner of means and medicines with him, as well sour and sharp as sweet and pleasant; but as soon as ever he beginneth to doubt of his recovery, he suffereth him to have whatsoever himself desireth. Even so the heavenly Physician, as long as He hath any hope to recover us, will not always suffer us to have what we most desire; but as soon as He hath no more hope of us, then He suffereth us for a time to enjoy all our own pleasure.—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(δ) It is harder to get sin felt by the creature, than the burden, when felt, removed by the hand of a forgiving God. Never was tender-hearted surgeon more willing to take up the vein, and bind up the wound of his fainting patient, when he hath bled enough, than God is by His pardoning mercy to ease the troubled spirit of a mourning penitent.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

Total Depravity.

i. 5–8. *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.*

By these powerful figures the prophet sets forth the moral corruption and the impending calamities of the people to whom he ministered. [Note that in vers. 7, 8, the prophet speaks as if the future were already present; so clear and vivid is his view of it.] **I. A whole nation may become morally corrupt.** Vice may defile and degrade all classes of society. **II. The natural tendency of national corruption is not to abate, but to spread and increase.** Vices are "*putrefying* sores." As in the body physical a disease or wound in one member may poison the whole body, so in the body politic the vice of any one class tends to spread through all society.—These two considerations should lead us—1. *To pray constantly and earnestly for our country.* "Christian England" left to itself, and unrestrained by divine grace and mercy, would soon become as Sodom and Gomorrah. 2. *Not to be selfishly indifferent to the sins of the classes of society to which we do not happen to belong.* This were as foolish as it would be for a man to give no heed to the fact that his neighbour's house was on fire, in forgetfulness of the other fact that fire spreads; or as if in the body the head were indifferent to the fact that the foot had received a poisoned wound. 3. *To put forth earnest efforts for the repression of public vices.* Mere passive reprobation of them will be of no avail. Nor can we reasonably hope that time will abate and lessen them. No; these "sores" are "*putrefying;*" and if the body politic is ever to be restored to moral health, they must be "closed, bound up, and mollified with ointment." In some cases this "ointment" must be moral suasion, in other cases legal coercion. This principle is already recognised in regard to cockfighting, the sale of indecent books and pictures, &c. **III. In a modified sense, the declarations of our text are true of every human being.** The doctrine of "total depravity" has been preached in such a manner as to discredit it, and statements have been made in exposition of it which would imply that every child comes into the world as wicked as Nero left it (not only depraved in every faculty, but in every faculty totally depraved!) This representation of the doctrine is contrary both to Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 13; 1 Pet. iv. 4, &c.) and to fact. But our rejection of this exaggerated form of it must not lead us to reject the doctrine itself. Our whole personality has been "depraved"—debased and deteriorated—by sin; the whole man—his affections, passions, understanding, reason, imagination, and will—has been impaired by the "fall;" just as by certain diseases *all* the functions of the body are disordered (α). The natural tendency of this inborn corruption is not to lessen with increasing years, but to intensify; as a matter of fact, *aged* sinners are always the vilest and most malignant. These facts—1. *Disclose man's need of a redemptive power external to himself.* Our moral corruption is not like one of those minor diseases which are best left to "nature;" it is like a cancer or a malignant fever—if it is left to run its course, it will kill us. There is in us no *vis medicatrix* capable of overcoming and expelling it. If we are to be restored to moral soundness, it must be by a Power external to us. 2. *Should lead us to accept with gratitude the proffered help of the Great Healer.* We all need His help. Without it we shall grow worse day by day. His help will avail for us, however desperate may be our case; as it was in the days of His flesh physically, so is it now morally and spiritually (Matt. iv. 23, 24; xiv. 36). **IV. Moral depravity brings on physical misery.** The desolation set forth in vers. 7, 8, was the natural consequence of the depravity denounced in vers. 5, 6. By an everlasting and most righteous decree a bad character and a bad condition are linked together, and can be only for a very little while disassociated. This is true both of nations and individuals. Sin inevitably leads to sorrow. Of this fact we have ten thousand evidences in this present world. Hence also the realm of unrelieved wickedness is the realm of unmitigated woe. Were men always

reasonable beings, the fearfulness and the certainty of the consequences of sin would be sufficient and prevailing arguments for repentance and amendment of life. Let them prevail with us (Ezek. xviii. 30, 21).

(α) It is not only the inferior powers of the soul which this plague of sin has seized, but the contagion has ascended into the higher regions of the soul. The most supreme, most spiritual faculty in man's mind, the understanding power of man, is corrupted, and needs renewing. To a carnal understanding not enlightened by the Word, this always has been and is the greatest paradox. Indeed, when blind reason, which thinks it sees, is judge, it is not strange that this corruption of the understanding should be a wonder to it. For reason, being the supreme faculty of all the rest, which judges all else, and is judged by none but itself, because of its nearness to itself, it least discerns itself. As a man's eye, though it may see the deformity of another member, yet not the bloodshot that is in itself, but it must have a glass by which to discern it. And so, though even corrupt nature discerns the rebellions of the affections and sensual part of man by its own light, as the heathens did, and complained thereof, yet it cannot discern the infection and defilement that is in the spirit itself, but the glass of the Word is the first that discovers it; and when that glass is also brought, there had need be an inward light of grace, which is opposite to this corruption, to discover it.—*T. Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

God's Reluctance to Punish.

i. 9. *Except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

God had humbled His people because of their transgressions, but He had not utterly destroyed them, as He might have done in strict justice. This reminds us—1. That the punishments that befall wicked men in this world frequently fall short of their deserts. 2. That this disproportion between guilt and chastisement occurs because God is not so much concerned to punish sin as to reclaim sinners. God chastises, in the first instance, that He may correct, and it is with reluctance that He increases the severity of His strokes (α).

These facts should lead us—1. *To adore the divine benignity.* How worthy of our love and worship is this God who is no mere vindictive avenger of broken law, but a loving Father who chastens us, not for His pleasure, but for our profit! 2. *To gratefully acknowledge the mercy that has mingled with the judgments which our sins have drawn down upon us* (Lam. iii. 10) (β). 3. *To shrink with abhorrence from any abuse of the divine long-suffering.* The fact that God is so reluctant to punish, instead of encouraging us in rebellion, should incite us to prompt and loving obedience. Nothing can be more *base* than to "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness;" and nothing could be more *dangerous* (γ) (Prov. xxix. 1).

(α) See note (α), page 18.

(β) If in an affliction we would pour forth to God such acceptable prayers as may obtain comfort in our crosses and deliverance from all our calamities, we must confess our sins, and humbly acknowledge that we deserve to be overwhelmed with much more heavy plagues and punishments. And so the Lord will excuse us when we accuse ourselves, remit our sins when we remember them, and absolve us from punishment when in all humility we acknowledge that we have justly deserved the fearfullest of His plagues. For if we, who have but a little of the milk of mercy, are moved with compassion when either our sons or our servants acknowledge their faults, and offer themselves of their own accord to suffer that punishment which they have deserved, how can we doubt that God, whose love and mercy towards us are infinite and incomprehensible, will be pitiful and ready to forgive us when He sees us thus humbled?—*Downame*, 1644.

(γ) Take heed of abusing this mercy of God. Suck not poison out of the sweet flower of God's mercy: do not think that because God is merciful you may go on in sin; this is to make mercy your enemy. None might touch the Ark but the priests, who by their office were more holy: none may touch this ark of God's mercy but such as are resolved to be holy. He that sins because of mercy shall have judgment without mercy. Mercy abused turns to fury (Deut. xxix. 19, 20). "The mercy of the Lord is upon them that fear Him." Mercy is not for them that sin and fear not, but for them that fear and sin not God's mercy is a holy mercy; where it pardons, it heals.—*Watson*, 1696.

The Summons to Jerusalem.

i. 10. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.*

The prophet being about to make a still more terrible announcement, puts forth a renewed call for attention. It is well worthy of our study. We find in it—

I. A Startling Description. "Rulers of Sodom, . . . people of Gomorrah." What an astonishing declaration is this, that Sodom, Gomorrah, and Jerusalem are synonymous terms! It reminds us—1. **That men may be morally alike to those from whom they think themselves the furthest removed.** Many a Protestant who hates the very name of Rome is himself a little Pope: he never doubts his own infallibility, and is ready to anathematise all who dare to dissent from him. Many a man who has never stood in the felon's dock is a thief at heart (α). The people of Jerusalem were ready to thank God that they were not as Sodom and Gomorrah, whereas they really resembled the people they despised. For, like the inhabitants of those guilty cities, they had been living—(1) In *habitual self-indulgence.* Self-indulgence may vary in its forms, but in its essential nature it is ever the same. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had pandered to the lusts of the body, the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the lusts of the mind (see vers. 17, 23; iii. 16, &c.) (2) *In habitual defiance of God.* The sins of which they were guilty were as plainly condemned in God's Word as were those by which the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah polluted themselves. All sin is rebellion against God (β), and the manner in which we sin is comparatively unimportant (James ii. 10). If we rebel against God, it does not matter much with what weapons we fight against Him. 2. **That men may be utterly unconscious of their own real character.** Self-delusion as to character is almost universal. Man can live in the practice of gross sin without any compunction of conscience. Laodicea and the foul criminal David are at peace until the rebukes of God begin to crash like thunders over their heads (Rev. iii. 17; 2 Sam. xii. 7). As such delusion is most common, so also it is most disastrous. It renders reform impossible. It sends men blindfolded into eternity to the most appalling surprises (γ). The remedy for it is earnest, searching, prayerful self-examination, conducted in the light of God's Word (δ). 3. **That God describes men according to their essential character.** He does not take men according to their own estimates of their character and conduct, and ticket them accordingly. His description of men is often precisely the opposite of that which they would give of themselves, and even of what men would give of them. His neighbours as well as himself would doubtless have described the prosperous farmer (Luke xii. 16) as a shrewd and wise man, but God pronounced him to be a fool. So here, these men who prided themselves that they were rulers of Jerusalem, the holy city, were declared to be "rulers of Sodom," the vilest of cities. Are we quite sure that God describes *us* as we have been accustomed to describe ourselves?

II. A Solemn Summons. "Hear the *word* of the Lord; . . . give ear unto the *law* of our God." What is the law to which attention is thus emphatically called? It is the great truth announced in the following verses (11–15), that **worship offered by ungodly men is not only without value, but is positively hateful in the sight of God.** The most flaming zeal concerning the externals of religion is often found in men of unholy life (ε). Judas was evidently so zealous in such matters as completely to delude his fellow-disciples: even when Christ announced that there was a traitor in their midst, no suspicion turned towards him; the eleven were more ready to suspect themselves than him (Matt. xxvi. 21).

Attention to the externals of religion is in itself a good thing; but unless it be conjoined with integrity and benevolence, it will secure for us at the last not the commendation but the condemnation of the Judge (Matt. xxiii. 23).

(α) To us there seems a wide difference between the judge, with the robes of office on his back, mind in his eye, and dignity in his mien, and that poor, pale, haggard wretch at the bar, who throws stealthy glances around, and hangs his head with shame. Yet the difference that looks so great to man may be very small in the eyes of God; and would look small in ours if we knew the different upbringing and history of both. The judge never knew what it was to want a meal; the felon often went cold and hungry to bed. The one, sprung of wise, kind, reputable, and perhaps pious parents, was early trained to good, and launched, with all the advantages of school and college, on an honourable and high career; while the other, bred up a stranger to the amenities of cultivated and Christian society, had no such advantages. Born to misery, his struggles with misfortune and evil began at the cradle. None ever took him by the hand to lead him to church or school. A child of poverty, and the offspring of abandoned parents, he was taught no lessons but how to swear, and lie, and drink, and cheat, and steal. The fact is, it is just as difficult for some to be honest as it is easy for others. What merit has that judge in his honesty? None. He had no temptation to be else than honest. And so, I suspect, much of the morality of that unblemished character and decent life in which many trust, saying to some poor guilty thing, "Stand aside, I am holier than thou," and pluming themselves on this, that they have not sinned as others have done—is due, less to their superior virtue, than to their more favourable circumstances. Have they not sinned as others have done? I reply, They have not been tempted as others have been. And so the difference between many honest men and decent women on the one hand, and those on the other hand on whom a brand of infamy has been burned, and the key of a prison turned, may be just the difference between the green branch on the tree and the white ashes on the hearth. This is bathed in the dews of night and fanned by the breath of heaven, while that, once as green, has been thrust into the burning fire—the one has been tried in a way that the other has not.—*Guthrie.*

(β) As every sin is a violation of a law, so every violation of a law reflects upon the lawmaker. It is the same offence to coin a penny and a piece; the same to counterfeit the seal of a subpœna, as of a pardon. The second table was writ by the hand of God as well as the first, and the majesty of God, as He is the lawgiver, is wounded in an adultery and a theft as well as in an idolatry or a blasphemy.—*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(γ) Is there anything more terrible than a false confidence? It is an awful thing to wake up and find that what we have been trusting in is rotten. To embark gaily in a ship that on mid-ocean proves to be worm-eaten and leaky; for a man who believed himself to be wealthy to receive tidings that the failure of a bank has made him a beggar; for a sick man rejoicing in the cessation of his pain to be told by his physician that that is due only to the setting in of mortification that precedes death;—what horrible disappointments are these! But what poor and faint images they furnish of the horror of that man who lives in a state of delusion as to his spiritual condition, who dies in peace, imagining falsely that he is Christ's, and who, when he has traversed the valley of the shadow of death—when he has reached that point from which there is no return, finds that the doors of heaven are shut against him, discovers that he is shrouded by thick darkness, and begins to feel the fires of hell kindling upon him! Can you picture to yourself his astonishment, his terror, his despair? Do not tell me that such a case is not conceivable—Christ declares that such cases are frequent (Matt. vii. 21–25).

(δ) "Examine yourselves:" a metaphor from metal, that is pierced through to see if it be gold within. Self-examination is a spiritual inquisition set up in one's soul: a man must search his heart for sin as one would search a house for a traitor: or as Israel sought for leaven to burn it.—*Watson*, 1696.

This duty of examining and proving supposes that there is some sure standard, which if we go by, we are sure not to be deceived. Now that rule is the Word of God. But as in matters of doctrine men have left the Scripture, the sure rule, and taken up antiquity, universality, tradition, and the like for their pride, and by this means have fallen into the ditch; so in matters of godliness, when we should try ourselves according to the characters and signs that the Scripture deciphers, we take up principles in the world, the applause of others, the conversation of most in the world. And thus it is with us as men in an hospital, because every one is either wounded or lame, or some way diseased, therefore none are offensive to each other.—*Burgess.*

Men compare themselves with men, and readily with the worst, and flatter themselves with that comparative betterness. This is not the way to see spots, to look into the muddy streams of profane men's lives; but look into the clear fountain of the Word, and there we may both discern and wash them; and consider the infinite holiness of God, and this will humble us to the dust.—*Leighton*, 1611–1684.

(ε) Fruit-trees that bring forth the fairest and most beautiful blossoms, leaves, and shoots, usually bring forth the fewest and least fruits; because where nature is intent and vigorously pressing to do one work, spend-

ing its strength there, it is at the same time weak about other works; but distinct and several works of nature, in moderate and remiss degree, are all promoted at the same time. Generally those persons who are excessive and most curious about the forms of duties, have least of the power of godliness. The Pharisees were excessively careful about the outside of God's worship. So it was among us of late years; bowing at the name of Jesus, the communion-table, surplice, common prayer, &c.,—those and suchlike were pressed with all eagerness and strictness. The body of religion was large and monstrous, but without a soul; or, if any, it was lean and feeble. These persons are like the Indian fig-tree that Pliny speaks of, which had leaves as broad as targets, but fruits no bigger than a bean. This is a foul fault among us at this day: men stand more about the forms of worship than about the power of it: they look so much after the way, manner, and circumstances that they almost lose the substance; things which are but as husks or shells to the kernels, or as leaves in respect of fruits.—*Austen*, 1656.

Many are set upon excess of ceremonies, because they are defective in the vital parts, and should have no religion if they had not this. All sober Christians are friends to outward decency and order; but it is the empty self-deceiver that is most for the unwarrantable inventions of man, and useth the worship of God but as a masque or puppet-show, where there are great doings with little life, and to little purpose. The chastest woman will wash her face; but it is the harlot, or wanton, or deformed, that will paint it. The soberest and the comeliest will avoid a nasty or ridiculous habit, which may make them seem uncomely where they are not; but a curious dress and excessive care doth signify a crooked or deformed body, or a filthy skin, or, which is worst, an empty soul, that hath need of such a covering. Consciousness of such greater want doth cause them to seek those poor supplies. The gaudiness of men's religion is not the best sign that it is sincere. Simplicity is the ordinary attendant of sincerity. It hath long been a proverb, "The more ceremony, the less substance; and the more compliment, the more craft."—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

Rejected Sacrifices.

i. 11. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord.*

Try to conceive what emotions would spring up in the breasts of the men to whom these words were first addressed—men who with most scrupulous care had fulfilled the requirements of a costly ceremonial worship, the respectable, the orthodox of their day. With what indignation they would rebuke the prophet, and how triumphantly they would remind him that all the sacrifices which they offered, and all the ceremonies they observed, were of divine appointment! And, doubtless, to their rebuke they would add a protestation that they had had a sincere delight in the services, which, they would not doubt, had come up as a sweet-smelling savour before the Lord. Both these allegations they might have made with truth, but the prophet would have dismissed them as irrelevant. What he denounced was not sacrifices, but certain sacrifices offered by particular individuals whose wickedness disqualified them for taking part in divine worship. "To what purpose is the multitude of *your* sacrifices," &c.

But why should the wickedness of the worshippers cause the rejection of the worship, seeing that *it* is of divine appointment? Because—1. *Sacrifices are in themselves worthless to God.* He does not need, nor is He enriched by our offerings (Ps. l. 7–13). 2. *Sacrifices were instituted merely to be expressions of and helps to human piety, and are worthless when there is no piety to be expressed or fostered by them.* Outward worship is to religion just what a bank-note is to commerce; it is valuable only in so far as it is really representative of something beyond itself. The worship which does not really represent penitence, faith, and love in the worshipper is a falsehood, and is necessarily repulsive to the God of truth, and to the offerer of it it is a deadly hurt. As the sunlight which develops life only hastens the putrefaction of the dead, so the very services which help to sanctify and ennoble the saintly may more completely disqualify the insincere for heaven. 3. *Piety towards God is proved, not by costly sacrifices and stately ceremonies, even though pungent emotions are experienced by those who offer and take part in them, but by its pervasive influence on the character and the life.* In family

life love is proved by obedience; and to our Heavenly Father the protestations of reverence and love which are offered by men who live in disregard and defiance of His requirements are naturally and necessarily repulsive (1 Sam. xv. 22, 23). No elaborateness or costliness of ceremonial worship can atone for the absence of godliness in the lives of the worshippers; sacrifices are no equivalents for sanctification; and by the love of sin in the soul of the pretended worshipper even a divinely-appointed ritual is rendered abhorrent to God.

Judaism and its ritual are now things of the past, but men still need to be reminded of the facts now pointed out. The men of our day, after committing during the week all the sins denounced in the prophecies of Isaiah, assemble in the sanctuary on the Sunday, and, because they enjoy its services, they imagine that they are well-pleasing to God, and will bring down His blessing on themselves. To-day, as of old, men need to be told plainly that public worship may be an abomination to God, and that, instead of making those who join in it more sure of heaven, it may, by confirming them in their self-delusion, make their eternal damnation more certain.

There is another side to all this. While "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," "*the prayer of the upright is His delight*" (Ps. cxlvii. 11; l. 23). Concerning the "true worshippers," who "worship the Father in spirit and in truth," it is declared that "the Father *seeketh* such to worship Him." How wonderful, how astonishing is that! That GOD, whom angels, archangels, and all the shining hosts of heaven adore, should not merely condescend to accept the worship of men upon earth, but that He should *seek* such worship! Think much of that surprising and comforting assurance. It used to seem to me almost too wonderful to be true, but I believe and understand it now. I am helped to understand it almost every day; for almost every day my little girl steals away from her nursemaid. I hear her climbing laboriously up the stairs; it is an immense journey for her little legs; and then presently she knocks at my door, and calls me by my name. I am often busy when she comes; she interrupts me when it is not pleasant to be interrupted; but, notwithstanding, I rejoice that there is so much love for me in her heart that she thinks it worth while to climb up so far, just to see me for a moment and then be sent down again. So the marvellous "*seeketh*" is explained by the word that comes before it! The "FATHER seeketh such to worship Him"! When His children come, and knock at His door, and call, "Abba, Father!" He listens with a joy that only a father can understand.

> "His saints are precious in His sight;
> He views His children with delight;
> He sees their hope, He knows their fear,
> And looks, and loves His image there."

TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION.

i. 11, 16, 17. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

What was the business of the ancient prophet? Not merely to predict events. His chief work was to make men realise vividly the presence of God. Religions, in order to their permanence, require system. But religious systems, with their creeds, forms, and ceremonies, have an inevitable tendency to coldness and deadness. The prophet was sent to counteract this tendency. It was his mission to restore to great words their great meanings, to cause moral

principles to reassert themselves as the lords of conscience and of will—in a word, to prophesy on the dry bones of a decaying religion until there came upon them flesh and sinew, and there passed into them the breath of spiritual life. Such a mission was that of Isaiah. In his time religion was in a state of petrifaction, nay, rather of putrefaction. From this fact his prophetic message takes its keynote. It begins with an invective that reminds us of John the Baptist.

What was the condition of things that provoked his indignation? Not a lack of religious observances; there was a redundancy of them. That which caused a righteous anger to burn within him vehemently was their perversion of the sacrificial system in which they gloried, their dissociation of it from the moral law, to which God intended it to be only a supplement. It was given to teach men the hatefulness and the terrible consequences of sin, and the duty of consecration to God; but they separated it from the moral law, and allowed all its spiritual meaning to drop out of it. Instead of using it as a help to morality, they were making it the substitute for morality. Coming up red-handed from their murders, and reeking with their foul vices, they stood up before God, claiming His favour; for were they not sacrificing to Him, yea, in accordance with the regulations Himself had given? No wonder that a man with veracity in him and a love of righteousness should pour out upon such men and such offerings the whole wrath of his nature.

From this exposition take the following practical lessons—1. *All forms of religion have a tendency to lose their original purity and freshness.* As a stream, clear at its fountain-head, but turbid before it reaches the sea; as our planet, which physicists say was flung off at first from the sun a glowing mass of light and heat, has been cooling down ever since; so is it with religions and churches. As a rule, their history has been one of gathering accretions and of diminishing purity and power in proportion to their distance from their fountain-head. So was it with Judaism. So has it been with Christianity. Contrast Christianity as we have it in St. Paul's epistles, all aglow with fervour and love, and that of the time of Leo X., with its professed head and most of his court professed infidels, and the officials of the Church selling indulgences to sin for money! Luther lit the fire again; but Protestantism has had its illustrations of the same law. Witness the state of things in this country in the last century. In view of this fact let the Church pray for prophetic spirits who shall in each generation rekindle the dying fires; and, apart from the influence of specially-gifted men, let each Church betake itself continually to the Fountain-head of spiritual life. 2. *False religiousness is worse than none at all.* Isaiah says, not simply that such observances are of no avail with God, but that they are abominations to Him. We can see the reason. Such a religion as that which Isaiah denounced works harm to the individual and to the cause of godliness generally; to the individual, by inspiring him with a vain confidence; to the cause of godliness, by furnishing points for the shafts of ridicule, by which faith is killed in many hearts. It would be difficult to say who are the greatest promoters of infidelity—professed atheists or hypocritical religionists. 3. *It is a perilous thing to overlook the connection between impression and practice in religion.* In vers. 16 and 17, the prophet shows us what the true nexus between them is. "Your ceremonies and observances will do you no good unless you practise the morality, the judgment, mercy, and love to which they point." Our power of receiving impressions is under a directly opposite law from our power of practice. The former steadily decreases by exercise, the latter as steadily increases. This is so in religion, as well as in other things. The impression produced upon the Jews by the sacrifices would decrease as they were repeated, unless by them they were led to practical righteousness, and their whole system would

in time become utterly powerless as a moral incentive; just as, if a man is for a few mornings wilfully deaf to an alarum in his bedroom, it presently loses its power even to waken him. The same law will operate with us. The preaching of the gospel is intended to produce impression, and that again to lead to practice. If the latter does not follow *at once*, the chances are all against its ever following, because the impressions will become feebler with each repetition. A fact this for all hearers to ponder. 4. *Religious observances and machinery of all kinds have their end in the development of character.* This was so in Isaiah's time. It is so now. If their religious observances were not leading them to "cease to do evil," and to "learn to do well," but were hindering them from doing so, it were better for them to give them up. So our creeds, organisations, ministers, &c., are of use only as related to character. They are the scaffolding, character is the building; they are the tools, that the work. If no building is going on, this parade of scaffolding is an imposture, and had better be swept away.—*J. Brierley, B.A.*

The Possibilities of Public Worship.

i. 13. *It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*

I. Public worship is a thing of Divine appointment. A considerable part of the earlier books of Scripture is occupied with injunctions to observe it, and with directions for its conduct. All the best men of ancient times made public worship part of the business of their lives. David, Josiah, Hezekiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah made great sacrifices that it might be duly honoured. Our Lord Himself, who set aside the traditions of men, was careful to observe this Divine ordinance; besides attending the great feasts, He attended the synagogue every Sabbath-day (Luke iv. 16). The apostles and early Christians were in this respect His true followers (Acts ii. 46; iii. 1). And we are expressly warned against neglect of it (Heb. x. 24, 25). **II. Public worship may be a means of communion with God.** It was this possibility that induced men to build the Temple, that there might be a recognised place of meeting, not only with each other, but with God. There God did often meet with them (Ps. lxiii. 2, xxvii. 4, &c.) The Temple now is wherever devout men are assembled for worship, and God, in the person of His Son, has expressly promised to be in their midst (Matt. xviii. 20). **III. Consequently public worship may be a thing of the highest profit to man.** Upon those to whom communion with God is indeed vouchsafed, public worship exerts a transforming and ennobling influence (α). They are uplifted for a season above the cares, the sorrows, and the joys of life; they receive new strength for the performance of life's duties and the bearing of life's burdens; from the mount of supplication they come down bearing a more real and abiding likeness to God than that which in the old time gave to the countenance of Moses an overwhelming splendour. **IV. It may also be a thing supremely acceptable to God.** When His children assemble to unite in expressing their common thankfulness, trust, and love for Him, He listens with fatherly delight (β). Compared with angelic worship, human worship is a very poor and imperfect thing; it is but an earthen vessel compared with a chalice of silver or of gold; but the emotions of gratitude, trust, and love with which it is filled, make it precious in His sight. There is a reversal of our Lord's saying (Matt. xxiii. 19): the rude altar is hallowed by the spiritual sacrifice.

These are some of the possibilities of public worship; but they are not the only ones. The reverse of all this may be true. The worship may be observed and offered without any real regard to the Divine will and pleasure; it may separate God and men still more

widely; it may be a curse to those who partake in it, and it may be a grievous offence to the Holy One of Israel.

Let us recall some of the things in connection with public worship which are apt to satisfy men. They are such as these: a crowded assembly; sweet singing; a noble liturgy; an eloquent sermon; a large collection. When these things are combined in any service, we are apt to felicitate ourselves exceedingly. But upon that very service God may look with unqualified condemnation. The crowd may have assembled for reasons very far removed from a desire to worship God; the singing may have been merely an artistic performance; the liturgy may have been made up of prayers such as that which a newspaper described as "the most eloquent ever *addressed to a Boston audience;*" the sermon may have had for its supreme object the glorification of the preacher; the contributors to the collection may have been moved merely by a desire to place the name of their congregation at the head of the subscription-list published in the newspapers on the following day. The whole thing may have been of the earth, earthy, and this may have been God's verdict concerning it, "It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

What, then, are the elements in worship essential to its acceptance with God? 1. *That it be offered by His people.* Not from rebels against His authority will He accept expressions of homage (γ); in their lips such expressions are mockeries vile and horrible as those wherewith in Pilate's judgment-hall the Roman soldiers jeered at the Son of God (Matt. xxvii. 27–29). 2. *That it be offered with reverence,* with that sweet and solemn awe which is born of a recognition of God's nearness and of His exceeding glory (Ps. lxxxix. 7) (δ). 3. *That it be the expression of love* —love singing in the hymns, breathing in the prayers, awakening "godly sorrow" for the sins of the past, leading to sincere and resolute dedication of the whole being to God for the future. Where these principles animate the worshippers, they will be governed by them also in daily life; their whole life will be a service and sacrifice well-pleasing in the sight of God, and what are called their "acts of worship" will not be artificial flowers stuck on to dead and rotting branches for their adornment, but sweet, natural blossoms, upon which God will smile, and which He will pronounce "very good."

(α) The mind is essentially the same in the peasant and the prince; the forces of it naturally equal in the untaught man and in the philosopher: only the one of these is busied in meaner affairs and within narrower bounds, the other exercises himself in things of weight and moment; and this it is that puts the wide distance between them. Noble objects are to the mind what the sunbeams are to a bud or flower: they open and unfold, as it were, the leaves of it, put it upon exerting and spreading itself every way, and call forth all those powers that lie hid and locked up in it. The praise and admiration of God, therefore, brings this advantage along with it, that it sets our faculties upon their full stretch, and improves them to all the degrees of perfection of which they are capable.—*Atterbury,* 1663–1732.

(β) No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs, were very acceptable unto Him; but if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the Church choir, His saints' prayers in consort together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together, the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the Church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels and saints make but one consort. There is a wonderful prevalency in the joint prayers of His people. When Peter was in prison, the Church meets and prays him out of his enemies' hands. A prince will grant a petition subscribed by the hands of a whole city, which maybe he would not at the request of a private subject, and yet love him well too. There is an especial promise to public prayer: "*Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.*"—*Gurnall,* 1617–1679.

(γ) If a person was to attend the levee of an earthly prince every court-day, and pay his obeisance punctually and respectfully, but at other times speak and act in opposition to his sovereign, the king would justly deem such a one an hypocrite and an enemy. Nor will a solemn and stated attendance on the means of grace in the house of God prove us to be God's children and friends,—if we confine our religion to the church walls, and do not devote

our lips and lives to the glory of that Saviour we profess to love.—*Salter.*

(δ) A remembrance of God's omnipresence will quell distractions in worship. The actual thoughts of this would establish our thoughts, pull them back when they begin to rove, and blow off all the froth that lies on the top of our spirits. An eye taken up with the presence of one object is not at leisure to be filled with another; he that looks intently upon the sun shall have nothing for a while but the sun in his eye. Oppose to every intruding thought the idea of the Divine omnipresence, and put it to silence by the awe of His majesty. When the master is present, scholars mind their books, keep their places, and run not over the forms to play with one another; and the master's eye keeps an idle servant to his work, that otherwise would be gazing at every straw, and prating to every passenger. How soon would the remembrance of this dash all extravagant fancies out of countenance, just as the news of the approach of a prince would make the courtiers bustle up themselves, huddle up their vain sports, and prepare themselves for a reverent behaviour in his sight. We should not dare to give God a piece of our heart, when we apprehend Him present with the whole; we should not dare to mock one that we knew were more inwards with us than we are with ourselves, and that beheld every motion of our mind as well as action of our body.—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

I have sometimes had the misfortune to sit in concerts where persons would chatter and giggle and laugh during the performance of the profoundest passages of the symphonies of the great artists; and I never fail to think, at such times, "I ask to know neither you, nor your father and mother, nor your name: I know what you *are*, by the way you conduct yourself here—by the want of sympathy and appreciation which you evince respecting what is passing around you." We could hardly help striking a man who should stand looking upon Niagara Falls without exhibiting emotions of awe and admiration. If we were to see a man walk through galleries of genius, totally unimpressed by what he saw, we should say to ourselves, "Let us be rid of such an unsusceptible creature as that."

Now I ask you to pass upon yourselves the same judgment. What do you suppose angels, that have trembled and quivered with ecstatic joy in the presence of God, think when they see how indifferent you are to the Divine love and goodness in which you are perpetually bathed, and by which you are blessed and sustained every moment of your lives? How can they do otherwise than accuse you of monstrous ingratitude and moral insensibility, which betoken guilt as well as danger!—*Beecher.*

God Oppressed.

i. 14. *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.*

It is the Almighty who here speaks, and His speech is a protest to men who imagined that by their worship they would conciliate and please Him. Their worship He rejects: it was polluted by the pollution of those who offered it. Instead of cleansing them, as they vainly dreamed, they had defiled it. It is the Almighty who speaks, and in what terms of intensity of pain! He speaks as one who has long been burdened by a load that has at length become intolerable. Strictly speaking, it is of worship offered to Him by ungodly men that He here expresses His abhorrence; but it is not conceivable—it is contrary to repeated declarations of His Word to suppose—that this is the only form of human transgression that is grievous to Him; and therefore we may fairly widen our contemplation, and consider—

I. **God's sensibility to human sin.** God is unchangeable; with Him there is no fickleness or caprice (James i. 17); this is one of the glories of His nature. But how strangely have philosophers and theologians interpreted this sublime declaration! They have presented us with a deity impassive as the stars, which shine with equal splendour upon the display of great virtues and the perpetration of hideous crimes, calm, serene, undisturbed by anything that takes place on earth. Not such is the God of the Bible. He thrills with intensest emotions of delight or of disapprobation, of joy or of sorrow (Jer. ix. 24; Nahum i. 6; Zeph. iii. 17; Gen. iii. 6). Let philosophers call these "anthropomorphic representations" if they will, but words have no meaning if such declarations do not teach that God is stirred by emotions which are determined by the

character and conduct of men. He is no cast-iron deity: He is "the living God." Sin is hateful to Him, because 1. *It is an infraction of that order which He has established for the moral well-being of the universe.* As the Sovereign of the universe, He is bound to resent and to punish any injury done to the meanest of His subjects (α). 2. *It is a defiance of His authority.* Every sinner is a rebel against the authority of the King of kings; and that king would be unworthy of his crown who could see his authority defied without feeling any emotion of displeasure, or without taking steps to vindicate his authority. It was precisely this selfish and pusillanimous weakness that made our Stephen despised and hated by his subjects. With God there is long-suffering and tender mercy, but there is no weakness. Sin is more than a defiance of God's authority; it is—3. *An offence against His feelings.* It is contrary to what we may call His instincts (β). That which is contrary to our best instincts fills us with disgust and anger. What profound emotion is stirred in a man of generosity and benevolence by a story of oppression and wrong! *e.g.*, the effect upon David of Nathan's parable (2 Sam. xii. 8). Whole communities have been roused to uncontrollable indignation by a crime of unusual atrocity, even though no member of the community has been directly affected thereby. "Lynch Law." So all sin, as sin, arouses the Divine disgust and indignation. "My *soul* hateth." 4. *It is a degradation of those whom God loves.* We all condemn and loathe drunkenness; but who of us loathes it as does that mother who is being hurried by it to an untimely and dishonoured grave? God loves us more than any mother ever loved her son, and His hatred of sin is proportioned by His love for us whom it degrades and destroys (γ). 5. *It is often a wrong inflicted on those whom He loves.* Few men sin without wronging others as well as themselves. Now with what anger do we burn when we detect our children defrauding and oppressing each other! But between the sputtering of a lucifer-match and the glowing fires of a volcano, there is not so much disparity as between the anger which the spectacle of sins against brotherhood kindles in us and that which it rouses in God (Jer. ix. 9). To form any adequate conception of the offensiveness of sin to God, we must remember that these considerations do not operate singly, but operate in combination to make it hateful to Him. How marvellous, then, is His endurance of it! Consider, then—

II. God's patience with human sin. He speaks here of being "troubled" by the worship of ungodly men; it is a burden of which He is "weary." Why, then, does He bear it for a moment? Why, then, does He not give quick vent to the indignation that burns within Him, and consume His troublers with swift destruction? He bears with us—1. *That by His patience He may appeal to our better feelings.* He does us good, and not evil (Matt. v. 45), that we may be made ashamed to sin against such generosity. When men are not altogether hardened in iniquity, there is nothing so likely to overcome them as a requital of wrongs by blessing (δ), especially where he who so requites it has full power to avenge himself. By His long-suffering, God has led countless thousands to repentance. 2. *That He may set us an example of self-restraint.* It is because He is Himself so slow to anger, that He is able to warn us against vindictiveness. God does not only lay upon us precepts of excellence: He Himself embodies them. 3. *That He may place the righteousness of His judgments beyond dispute.* A space of grace and forbearance seems necessary to enable onlookers to perceive that the awful doom which at length will come upon sinners is fully deserved, and is perfectly consistent with His own mercifulness. If "Wisdom" had not "called," reproved, counselled, "stretched out her hands" in entreaty, the stern words in which she announces the awful and irrevocable doom of her despisers would shock us (Prov. i. 20, 32). 4.

That a moral probation may be rendered possible. If punishment always instantly and obviously followed transgression, the world would be ruled by terror so overwhelming that free agency would be destroyed, and virtue consequently rendered impossible. For such reasons as these, God bears with sinners, and "sentence against an evil work" is not executed speedily.

III. **God's protest against human sin.** God suffers under human sin, but He does not suffer in silence: He vehemently protests against it. Two reasons should lead us to heed this protest:—1. *Gratitude.* He might have sent vengeance without warning. His protests and threatenings are proofs of His love. All that is noblest and best in us should lead us to give instant and thankful heed when God appeals to us, and says, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" (Jer. xliv. 4). But if sin has so debased your nature that higher considerations such as this cannot move you, then I appeal—2. to your *instinct of self-preservation.* God's protest against sin is no unmeaning form: His threatenings against sin are no empty words (Prov. xxix. 1). Rightly considered, the sinner's untroubled condition is the most awful of all warnings (ε).

(α) The tempter persuadeth the sinner that it cannot be that God should make so great a matter of sin, because the thoughts of a man's heart, or his words, or deeds, are matter of no great moment, when man himself is so poor a worm, and whatever he doth it is no hurt to God. But if God so much regard us as to make us, and preserve us continually, and to become our Governor, and make a law for us and judge us, and reward His servants with no less than heaven; then you may easily see that He so much regardeth us, as to observe whether we obey or break His laws. He that so far careth for a clock or watch, as to make it and wind it up, doth care whether it go true or false. What do these men make of God, who think He cares not what men do! Then He cares not if men beat you, or rob you, or kill you, for none of this hurteth God. And the king may say, "If any murder your friends and children, why should I punish him? he hurt not me." But justice is to keep order in the world, and not only to preserve the governor from hurt: God may be wronged, though He be not hurt. And He will make you pay for it, if you hurt others; and smart for it, if you hurt yourself.—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(β) Our sin is not so much a violation of a law that lies outside of the bosom of God, as it is a disregard of the feelings and nature of God Himself. You will by a moment's reflection see that there is a marked distinction between personal feeling infringed upon and law transgressed. The magistrate sits upon the bench, and a culprit is brought before him. There are two ways in which that culprit may be considered as transgressing. He may have broken the law of the land, which the magistrate represents officially, but not personally. The magistrate regards him as a culprit, to be sure. But suppose that, in the exercise of truth and justice by a pure administration or decision, the magistrate arouses the anger of the culprit, and he insults him to his face, and in his own court; is there any difference between his former crime, which was the violation of the law of the land, and in his latter crime, which is a transgression of the feeling of the magistrate, acting as a magistrate?

It is the same everywhere. When you employ men in your affairs, you know that there is a distinction between a disregard of the rules of business, and a personal disagreement with yourself. You know that when a man offends against you, his wrong is more heinous and provoking than when he offends against your rules or laws. We know that a child may violate the laws of morality as they are established by the Word of God and by the consent of the community; that he may violate the civil law of the land in which he dwells; that he may violate the rules and regulations of a well-ordered family; and yet, though all these courses of conduct are grievous wrongs which shock the parent, not be as culpable as when he treads on the feeling of the parent. There are exigencies in which the child flies, as it were, in the heart of the father and mother, and does not so much violate their command as their living feeling; and we all know that this is regarded as more intolerable and more flagrant than simply setting aside and forgetting or transgressing a law. In other words, it is possible to break a statute; that is one kind of transgression. It is possible, also, to sin by directly infringing upon the heart and the feeling; that is another kind of transgression, and one that is considered more stinging, more intolerable, and more unforgivable than any other.

Now God and His law are one, in the sense in which we approach Him as moral beings—one in such a sense that when we offend against His moral law, we offend against His own personal feeling. He is not a magistrate for whom a system has been framed, and to the administration of which He comes under a sense of justice. He is a universal Father, administering according to His own instincts, His own tastes, His own affections, His own feelings, among His children.

God's law is God's self, pervading the universe, and our transgression is a personal affront of God Himself. Just as when your taste, or your love, or your conscience, is violated by the direct act of another person against yourself, the offence is greater than if any exterior canon were broken; so it is when we violate the divine commands.

This conception of God should quicken every moral sensibility, and make a life of sin painful and distasteful to us. It is one thing to sin against a government, and another thing to sin against a being. There are a great many children that will sin against the family arrangements, who would not sin against their mother. There is many a child to whom the mother says, "My dear child, you know your father has made a law in this family, that such and such things shall not be done, and you know you have broken that law three or four times; now, for my sake, avoid breaking it again." The child feels, when the mother interposes herself, that there is something that touches him which did not when it was only a law of the family that he was setting aside.

Now, God puts Himself in just that position, and the motive of obedience and righteousness is this: that God is the tenderest, the most patient, the gentlest, and the dearest friend that we have; that He knows everything within and without; and that though we are sinful and wicked, He, in His infinite compassion and mercy, forgives us, and says, "Do not sin against me, nor against mine."—*Beecher.*

When a man defrauds you in weight, he sins against *you*, not against the scales, which are only the instruments of determining true and false weight. When men sin, it is against God, and not against His law, which is but the indicator of right and wrong. You care little for sins against God's law. It has no blood in its veins, no sensibility. Now, every sin that you commit is personal to God, and not merely an infraction of His *laws*. It is casting javelins and arrows of base desire into His loving bosom. I think no truth can be discovered which would be so powerful upon the moral sense of men, as that which should disclose to them that sinning is always a personal offence against a personal God. Law without is only an echo of God's heart-beat within.—*Beecher.*

(γ) Is there any human being who so hates the sin of a child, or the companion of that friend? To whose eye so much as to the eye of the lover is a defect a thing to be abhorred? Is there anywhere in the world such compassion as is found in a father or in a mother over the sin or fault of the child? Yea, with evil associates, with growing bluntness of feeling, with accumulating evasions and deceits, with a development of serpent passions, with a life by day and by night that emasculates manliness, the mother sees her boy going steadily down, step by step; and in her nightly vigils, with strong crying and tears, she pours herself out before God, abhorring with unutterable detestation all these terrible evils that threaten the life and immortality of her son; and for years she carries in her soul the suffering that ought to be in his, and bears his sin, his sorrow, and his shame, and lies humiliated, and bowed down in the dust, the just for the unjust.—*Beecher.*

God hates sin, because it destroys what He loves. He could live high and lifted up above all noise of man's groaning, all smoke of his torment; but His nature is to come down after man—to grope for him amid all the dark pollutions of sin, and, if possible, to rescue and cleanse him.

God hates sin very much, as mothers hate wild beasts. One day a woman stood washing beside a stream. She was in a wild frontier country, and the woods were all around. Her little, only child was playing about near her. By and by she missed the infant's prattle, and, looking about, she called its name. There was no answer. Alarmed, the mother ran to the house, but her babe was not there. In wild distress the poor woman now fled to search the woods, and there she found her child. But it was only its little *body* that she clasped to her heart. A wolf had seized her treasure, and when, at last, she rescued it from those bloody fangs, its spirit had gone. Oh, how that mother hated wolves! And do you know that this is the very figure Christ uses to show what feeling He has towards the sin that is seeking to devour His children!—*Beecher.*

It makes a difference to God how we act. His happiness is affected by the conduct of His children; for His heart is the heart of a father. If, when my child sins, a pang goes through my own soul, and I fly to rescue him from further iniquity, it is because God struck into my breast a little spark of what in Him is infinite.—*Beecher.*

(δ) A group of rough men were assembled at a tavern one night. One man boasted that it did not make any difference what time he went home, his wife cheerfully opened the door, and provided an entertainment if he was hungry when he got home. So they laid a wager. They said: "Now, we'll go along with you. So much shall be wagered. We'll bet so much that when you go home, and make such a demand, she will resist it." So they went along at two or three o'clock in the morning and knocked at the door. The door opened, and the man said to the wife: "Get us a supper." She said: "What shall I get?" He selected the articles of food. Very cheerfully were they provided, and about three or four o'clock in the morning they sat down at the table—the most cheerful one in all that company the Christian wife—when the man, the ruffian, the villain, who had demanded all

this, broke into tears and said: "I can't stand this. Oh what a wretch I am!" He disbanded that group. He knelt down with his Christian wife and asked her to pray for the salvation of his immortal soul, and before the morning dawned they were united in the faith and hope of the Gospel. A patient, loving, Christian demeanour in the presence of transgression, in the presence of hardness, in the presence of obduracy and crime, is an argument from the throne of the Lord Almighty.—*Talmage.*

(e) Since we know God to be grievously displeased with sin, there is something awful in His keeping silence while it is committed under His eye. If a child comes home conscious of having offended a parent, and the parent says nothing all that night, but merely looks very grave, the child is more frightened than he would be by a sharp rebuke or severe punishment, for if such rebuke or punishment were inflicted, he would at least know the worst; but when the parent is silent, he knows not what may be hanging over him. So when we remember how many things plainly offensive to God are going on all around us, it is a terrible thought that He is still silent. We fear that He is but getting ready to take vengeance on those who defy Him. And so that passage which we have quoted from the Psalms carries on the train of thought in what follows: "God is a righteous judge, strong and patient, and God is provoked every day. If a man will not turn, He will whet His sword, He hath bent His bow, and made it ready."

In countries where earthquakes happen, a dead silence always goes before the earthquake. Nature seems hushed into an awful stillness, as if she were holding her breath at the thought of the coming disaster. The air hangs heavily; not a breath fans the leaves; the birds make no music; there is no hum of insects; there is no ripple of streams; and this while whole houses, and even cities sometimes, are hanging on the brink of ruin. So it is with God's silence,—it will be followed, when it seems deepest, by the earthquake of His judgments. And so the holy Apostle writes to the Thessalonians: "When they shall say, Peace and safety" (from the fact of God's being so still and so dumb), "then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."—*Goulburn.*

Worthless Husks.

i. 15. *And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.*

The Jews had been likened unto the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (ver. 10). As such, they are summoned to listen to a series of declarations of which this is the sum, that worship without holiness is a solemn mockery. Confining ourselves to our text only, we may see that it teaches us—I. **The worthlessness of ritualism without spontaneity.** "When ye spread forth your hands," &c. 1. *Ritualism is an essential element of public worship.* There must be some form by which thought can be expressed, and the devotions of others guided. There may be too little, or too much, but *some* is indispensable (*a*). 2. *Ritualism may be the expression of earnest spiritual life, and a help thereto.* It may be the outcome of sincere feeling and deep piety—such was the ritual which David and his devout companions devised and elaborated for the service of the Temple. It was costly and magnificent beyond even that which is observed in St. Peter's at Rome; but as practised by them it was as spiritual as the baldest service that has ever been conducted in the barest conventicle. A splendid ritual may be acceptable to the Most High, and the followers of George Fox must not imagine that they are the only persons who worship God "in spirit and in truth." 3. But *ritualism may be, and often is, only a form.* It may mean only an exhibition of millinery, a scrupulous observance of a prescribed series of postures and genuflexions. It may be, according to a too suggestive phrase, merely a service "performed." In this case God passes it by with contempt. To all engaged in such histrionic performances He says, "When ye spread forth your hands," &c. Supplication without desire will never draw down the Divine benediction. II. **The worthlessness of prayer without purity of heart.** "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear." 1. *Prayer is a necessity of the Christian life.* A consciousness of weakness and want, and a profound conviction of God's power and willingness to succour him, prompts the Christian to make "many prayers."

And each supplication so inspired finds its way to the throne and heart of God. To hear and answer the prayers of His children is one of our Heavenly Father's joys (ch. lxv. 24). 2. But *prayer, like ritualism, instead of being the expression of a realised need, may be only an empty form.* The supplications that are offered may be uttered merely by rote, with as little feeling as a child recites the multiplication-table; or they may be devices by which deluded men seek to propitiate that God whom they are offending by their conduct every day,—mere lip-homage, which they imagine He will accept in condonation of their habitual disregard of His will. In either case, their "many prayers" are worthless husks which He rejects with disdain.

If we would have our worship accepted of God, there must be—1. *Scriptural conceptions of His character.* These will prevent us from mocking Him by merely formal prayers or praises. 2. *A solemn realisation of His presence.* How often this is lacking in those who take part in the service of the sanctuary, and even in those who conduct them! But God is not throned in some distant heaven, to which our prayers struggle up we know not how: He is HERE! We shall never be nearer to Him than we are to-day! 3. *An earnest endeavour after holiness in daily life* (Ps. lxvi. 18). See why God would not regard the uplifted hands of the Jewish suppliants—"Your hands are full of blood." See also ch. lix. 1–3. To no rebel is access to the presence-chamber of the King of kings granted: this is the high privilege of those only who can lift up "holy hands" (1 Tim. ii. 8).—*A. F. Barfield.*

(α) The external part of religion is, doubtless, of little value in comparison with the internal; and so is the cask in comparison with the wine contained in it: but if the cask be staved, the wine must perish. If there were no Sundays or holydays, no ministers, no churches or religious assemblies, no prayers or sacraments, no Scriptures read, or sermons preached, how long would there be any religion left in the world: and who would desire to live in a world where there was none?—*Horne*, 1730–1792.

Forms are necessary to religion as the means of its manifestation. As the invisible God manifests His nature—His power, wisdom, and goodness, in visible material forms, in the bright orbs of heaven, in the everlasting hills, in the broad earth with its fruits and flowers, and in all the living things which He has made,—so the invisible soul of man reveals its convictions and feelings in the outward acts which it performs. As there could be no knowledge of God without the visible forms in which He reveals Himself, so there could be no knowledge of the religion which exists in the soul of man without the outward forms in which it expresses itself. A form is the flag, the banner, the symbol of an inward life; it is to a religious belief what the body is to the soul; as the soul would be utterly unknown without the body, so religion would be unknown without its forms, a light hidden under a bushel, and not set up in a candlestick that it may give light to all that are in the house.

Forms are necessary not only to the manifestation of religion, but to its nourishment and continued existence. A religion which expressed itself in no outward word or act would soon die out of the soul altogether. The attempt to embody truth and feeling, to express it in words and actions, is necessary to give it the character of living principle in the soul: in this respect forms are like the healthy exercise which at once expresses and increases the vigorous life of the body, or they may be compared to the leaves of a tree, which not only proceed from its inward life, but catch the vitalising influences of the light, the rain and the atmosphere, and convey them down to the root.

What, then, is that formalism which is everywhere in the Scripture, and especially in the discourses of our Lord, described as an offence and an abomination in the sight of God? I answer, formalism is the substitution of the outward rite in the place of the inner spirit and life of the soul; it is the green leaf which still hangs upon the dead branch which has been lopped off.—*David Loxton.*

(β) God doth not institute worship-ordinances for bodily motion only; when He speaketh to man He speaketh as to a man, and requireth human actions from him, even the work of the soul, and not the words of a parrot or the motion of a puppet.—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

You think you serve God by coming to church; but if you refuse to let the Word convert you, how should God be pleased with such a service as this? It is as if you should tell your servant what you have for him to do, and because he hath given you the hearing, he thinks he should have his wages, though he do nothing of that which you set him to do. Were not this an unreasonable servant? Or would you give him according to his expectation? It is a strange thing that men should think that God will save them for dissembling

with Him; and save them for abusing His name and ordinances. Every time you hear, or pray, or praise God, or receive the sacrament, while you deny God your heart and remain unconverted, you do but despise Him and show more of your rebellion than your obedience. Would you take him for a good tenant that at every rent-day would duly wait on you, and put off his hat to you, but bring you never a penny of rent? Or would you take him for a good debtor that brings you nothing but an empty purse, and expects you should take that for payment? God biddeth you come to church and hear the Word; and so you do, and so far you do well; but withal, He chargeth you to suffer the Word to work upon you hearts, and to take it home and consider of it, and obey it, and cast away your former courses, and give your hearts and lives to Him; and this you will not do. And you think that He will accept of your service! —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

Reasons for the Rejection of Prayer.

i. 15. *When ye make many prayers, I will not hear.*

God has characterised Himself as "the Hearer of prayer;" and it is the great consolation of His people that they cannot seek His face in vain. But here He declares that He will not hear the prayers of Israel, however many. This solemn and momentous declaration may well lead us to inquire why prayer is, in many instances, rejected. Prayer, to be heard, must be both *right* and *real*. If it possess neither of these characteristics, or only one of them—if it is *neither right nor real*, or is *right without being real*, or *real without being right*—it cannot fail to be rejected.

I. A man may pray *rightly*, either because he has been taught the principles of orthodoxy, and knows what language is conformable to those principles, or because he uses prayers composed by spiritual men, or, finally, because he uses the very words prescribed or sanctioned by God Himself. But in all these cases, while his prayer may be right, it may be altogether unreal. He may neither know the meaning of the requests it contains, nor desire their fulfilment (*α*). Thus do many men pray for a free pardon for Christ's sake, for entire sanctification, and repeat the Lord's Prayer. There is nothing in the heart corresponding to what is expressed by the lips; nay, the heart and the mouth are often completely at variance with each other.

II. Prayer may be *real without being right*. A man may really acknowledge mercies received, and petition for more; and yet neither the acknowledgment nor the petition may be regarded by God. The acknowledgment and the petition have reference to mere earthly desires already gratified or yet to be gratified. He thanks God that his "lusts have had the food which they craved;" he prays that they may never want it. Pride, vanity, the love of ease, pleasures, and worldly respectability are "lusts" on which he has hitherto "consumed," and on which he intends still to "consume," the good things which God has given, or may yet give him. The secret soul of all his supplications is not any zeal for the glory of God, but selfishness. His prayers are of the earth, earthy. The spiritual blessings which God holds out in His right hand he passes by in contemptuous neglect, and clamours for the natural blessings which are in God's left hand.

III. Both the faults of prayer above referred to are often found in one and the same individual, and the guilt of both accumulated on one and the same head.

Let it not be inferred from what has been said that we lay an interdict on natural blessings, and forbid the seeking of them in prayer. Our Saviour has given us authority to ask for daily bread, and this fully warrants the conclusion that natural blessings, as well as spiritual, may and ought to form a subject of prayer. We ought to "seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and *then* ask Him to fulfil His promise of "adding unto us all other things."—*R. Nesbit, Discourses*, pp. 308–319.

(a) Will men's prayers be answered? Not if they pray as boys whittle sticks—absently, hardly knowing or caring what they are about. I have known men begin to pray about Adam, and go on from him to the present time, whittling their stick clear to a point, with about as much feeling, and doing about as much good as the boy does.—*Beecher.*

I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray,
And do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say?
I may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone,
For words without the heart
The Lord will never hear;
Nor will He to those lips attend
Whose prayers are not sincere.
—*John Burton.*

A Startling Charge.

i. 15. *Your hands are full of blood.*

Such is the reason which God assigns for turning a deaf ear to the prayers of His ancient people: the hands they lifted up to Him in supplication were blood-stained. It was as if Cain, red with the murder of Abel, had lifted up his hands in prayer to God for blessing. By this startling charge we are reminded—**I. That between the estimates formed by God and men as to what takes place in the sanctuary there is often an infinite disparity.** Behold the court of the temple filled, apparently, with devout worshippers, who lift up their hands to heaven in earnest supplication,—what a pleasing sight! But God looks down, and says, "Those hands are full of blood." The same contrast is repeated in another form (ch. xxix. 13). Other contrasts: Eli sees what he thinks to be a drunken woman; God sees a humble suppliant (1 Sam. i. 12, 13). Men see an eminently religious man praying in the sanctuary; God sees a man prostituting prayer into a means of self-glorification (Luke xviii. 11, 12). Men see a foul wretch whose presence in the sanctuary is a pollution; God sees a broken-hearted penitent, and hastens to bless him (Luke xviii. 13, 14). So it is in our sanctuaries to-day. **II. That God holds us responsible for the ultimate consequences of our actions.** The men who thronged the temple in Isaiah's time, and whose prayers God rejected, were not bandits and murderers in the ordinary and coarse fashion by which men are brought to the scaffold. Yet the charge brought against them was true. For there are other ways of murdering men than by acts of violence of which human law takes note. By grievous oppression millions of men have been brought to an untimely grave. If a man destroys another by *slow* poison, is he not as truly a murderer as another who kills his victim by means of prussic acid? In God's sight oppression is murder; and of oppression in its worst forms the Jews had been guilty (ver. 23; iii. 14, 15, &c.) It is in accordance with this declaration that opprobrium is heaped upon Jeroboam as the man "who made Israel to sin" (2 Kings x. 29); and that we are so sternly warned against leading others into transgression (Matt. xviii. 6, &c.) This fact—1. *Casts some light on the doctrine of future punishment.* The results of the evil actions of men go on eternally propagating themselves, and it is therefore not unjust that the punishment of those actions should be eternal also. 2. *Should cause us to halt when we are tempted to acts of unkindness and oppression.* Unwillingly we may thereby become murderers. 3. *Should lead us to be most watchful as to the example we set before others.* If we hold our false lights by which they are caused to make shipwreck "concerning faith" and character, God will hold us responsible for the disaster (Rom. xiv. 15, &c.) **III. That sin is naturally indelible.** These Jews came into the sanctuary with hands carefully cleansed, but yet in God's sight they were "full of blood." 1. The stains of sin cannot be washed out by *time.* Time obliterates much, but it does not obliterate guilt. Men are apt to be troubled in conscience

about recent sins, but to be at ease concerning those committed many years previously. But this is a mistake. Lapse of time makes no difference to God; the inscriptions in His books of record never fade. Hence the wisdom of David's prayer (Ps. xxv. 7). 2. The stain of sin cannot be washed out by *worship*. That it might be so was the vain dream of the Jews, as it is of millions to-day. But worship itself is an offence when it is offered by ungodly men; so far from diminishing their guilt, it increases it (Prov. xxviii. 9, &c.) 3. The stain of sin cannot be washed out by *sorrow*. Sorrow for the past alters nothing in the past: the crime remains, no matter how many tears the criminal may shed (α). 4. The stain of sin cannot be washed out even by *reformation of conduct and character*. Men speak of "turning over a new leaf," and when they have done what this phrase implies, they are apt to be at peace. But this also is a mistake. They forget that the old, evil leaf remains, and that for what is inscribed thereon God will call them to account. As there is a "godly sorrow" and a "worldly sorrow," so there is a religious and an irreligious reformation of conduct. The former is the result of evangelical repentance, and is of exceeding worth (Ezek. xviii. 27, 28); the latter is a mere act of prudence, and is of no moral account. In one way, and in one way only, can the stain of guilt be effaced from the human soul (1 John i. 7–9).

(α) Repentance *qualifies* a man for pardon, but it does not, cannot, *entitle* him to it. It is one of the most elementary and obvious truths of morality, that the performance of one duty cannot be any compensation for neglect to perform another duty. But when a sinner is penitent for his sins, he is merely doing what, *as a sinner*, he ought to do; and his feelings of contrition do no more to absolve him from his guilt than the gratitude a man feels to a doctor who has cured him from a dangerous illness does to discharge the doctor's bill. As in this case there ought to be both gratitude and payment, so in the case of the sinner there must be both penitence and atonement. The sinner's sorrow for his sin, while in itself a proper thing, is no more an atonement for his sin than is the remorse that fills the breasts of most murderers any atonement for the murders they have committed. Judas was sorry, profoundly and intensely sorry, for having betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ, but did *that* do away with the guilt of that betrayal? Was Peter not to be blamed for his denial of his Master, because afterwards "he went out and wept bitterly"? Did the tears he shed give him any right to say in after years—"Yes, I denied my Lord, but I was sorry for it, and so made it straight"? Do you think that just as with soap and water you can wash the dirt off your hands, you can with a few tears, or with many tears, wash the guilt of sin from off your soul? No delusion could be more groundless. Oh no! You have the real fact and the true philosophy of the matter in the well-known verse—

> "Not the labours of my hands
> Can fulfil Thy law's demands.
> Could my zeal no respite know
> *Could my tears for ever flow,*
> All for sin could not atone:
> THOU must save, and THOU alone."

MORAL ABLUTION.

i. 16. *Wash you, make you clean.*

This is one of a very numerous class of passages which summon sinners to the duty of moral purification, of thorough and complete reformation of character (Jer. iv. 14; James iv. 8; Jer. xviii. 11; Ezek. xviii. 30–32, &c.) These passages are very clear and emphatic, but they seem to be in opposition to others which assert man's natural inability to do anything that is good (Matt. vii. 18; Rom. vii. 18–23; John xv. 5), with others which teach that repentance is a Divine gift (Acts v. 31; 2 Tim. ii. 25), and with those which teach that sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 11, &c.) The opposition is only apparent (α). Every Divine command really involves a promise of the grace necessary for its accomplishment, and God is ever ready to work with and in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (β). Fallen as we are, we yet retain the power of responding to or of rejecting His admonitions; if we respond to them, there instantly begins to flow into our

souls that which will enable us to accomplish everything that God has required (Phil. iv. 13). Three great questions—I. Why must we cleanse ourselves from evil? 1. *Because sin renders us offensive to God.* It is in itself repulsive to Him, just as immodesty in all its forms and in every degree is repulsive to a virtuous woman (Hab. i. 13). 2. *Because it is destructive to ourselves.* In physical matters dirt and disease are inseparable, and so they are in spiritual. Moral pollution leads to moral decay. Sin is a leprosy that eats away all the finer faculties of the soul. 3. *Because it renders us dangerous to our fellow-men.* In the measure that we are corrupt, we shall corrupt others. There is a terrible contagiousness in iniquity (Prov. xxii. 24, 25; Rev. xviii. 4). A sinner is a walking pestilence. And 4. The special lesson of our text in its connection—*Because otherwise access to the throne of grace will be closed against us.* If it be not so with us now, yet there will come a season when it will be supremely important to us that God should hear our prayers (a time of great trouble, or the hour of death), and how awful will be our condition if God should then turn a deaf ear to us! But this is the doom of obdurate sinners (ver. 15; Jer. xi. 14, &c.) II. How may we cleanse ourselves from evil? 1. *By resolutely putting off our old evil habits.* This is what Isaiah exhorted the Jews to do (vers. 16, 17). Similar exhortations occur in the New Testament (Eph. iv. 25–29; Heb. xii. 1) Begin with the faults of which you are most conscious (γ). Begin and continue the great task of moral reformation in humble dependence upon God. 2. *By prayer.* In earnest communion with God our views of duty and purity receive a marvellous elevation, and we catch the inspiration of the Divine character, so that iniquity, instead of being attractive, becomes hateful to us also (δ). 3. *By humble but resolute endeavours to copy the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 4. *By intercourse with the people of God* (ε). 5. *By making the Word of God the only and absolute rule of our life* (Ps. cxix. 1). These are the means by which we may attain to moral purity in the future. Cleansing from the guilt of sin in the past is bestowed freely on all who believe in Jesus (1 John i. 7–9). Yea, the guilt of a man whose hands are literally "full of blood" may thus be washed away; *e.g.*, Saul, the persecutor and murderer of the saints (Acts xxii. 4, 16; 1 Tim. i. 16). III. When may we cleanse ourselves from evil? NOW! this very hour the task ought to be begun. 1. Difficult as the task is, delay will only increase its difficulty (ζ). 2. Now, because God's commands brook no delay. (Ps. xcv. 7, 8). 3. Now! because now though God may be willing to-day to grant you "repentance unto life," by your delay you may so provoke Him to anger that *to-morrow* repentance may be denied you.

(α) There is no contradiction between these statements and the command to repent. Whoever considers what repentance is,—that it is a change of mind toward sin, so that what once was loved is viewed with disgust, and what was pursued with eagerness is shunned with abhorrence,—will perceive at once that it can only be wrought in us by a Divine power. Man's natural tendencies are toward evil; and a river could as easily arrest itself on its way to the ocean, and climb to the sources whence it sprang, as can man without the help of the Holy Spirit learn to hate sin because of what it is. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." The polluted fountain of our heart will never cleanse itself. Repentance, like every other gift, must come from the Father of lights.

But "God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." By His Holy Spirit He strives in every human soul, awakening desires after a better and purer life. By His long-suffering, by messages from His Word, by the monitions of His providence, He strives to lead us to repentance. But *we* must repent. As while the earth cannot bear fruit unless the sun shine upon it, it is still the part of the earth to be fertile; so while we cannot repent unless God aid us, it is our part to turn from evil. Repentance cannot be exercised *for* us; it must be exercised *by* us.

God commands you to repent, just as to the apostles, when five thousand hungry men, besides women and children, surrounded them, and their whole store was five loaves and two fishes, Christ said, "Give ye them to eat." The task is as much beyond your unaided power as that was above theirs; but address yourself to it as they did, in obedience to the Divine behest, and you will receive power from on

high to accomplish not only it, but other tasks higher yet.

(β) The gospel supposeth a power going along with it, and that the Holy Spirit works upon the minds of men, to quicken, excite, and assist them in their duty. If it were not so, the exhortations of preachers would be nothing else but a cruel and bitter mocking of sinners, and an ironical insulting over the misery and weakness of poor creatures, and for ministers to preach, or people to hear sermons, upon any other terms, would be the vainest expense of time and the idlest thing we do all the week; and all our dissuasives from sin, and exhortations to holiness and a good life, and vehement persuasions of men to strive to get to heaven, and to escape hell, would be just as if one should urge a blind man, by many reasons and arguments, taken from the advantages and comfort of that sense, and the beauty of external objects, by all means to open his eyes, and to behold the delights of nature, to see his way, and to look to his steps, and should upbraid him, and be very angry with him, for not doing so.—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(γ) Rooting up the large weeds of a garden loosens the earth, and renders the extraction of the lesser ones comparatively easy.—*Eliza Cook.*

(δ) There is an antipathy between sinning and praying. The child that hath misspent the whole day in playing abroad, steals to bed at night for fear of a chiding from his father. Sin and prayer are such contraries, that it is impossible at a stride to step from one to another. Prayer will either make you leave off sinning, or sinning will make you leave off prayer.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

The first true sign of spiritual life, prayer is also the means of maintaining it. Man can as well live physically without breathing, as spiritually without praying. There is a class of animals—the cetaceous, neither fish nor seafowl, that inhabit the deep. It is their home; they never leave it for the shore; yet, though swimming beneath its waves and sounding its darkest depths, they have ever and anon to rise to the surface that they may breathe the air. Without that these monarchs of the deep could not exist in the dense element in which they live, and move, and have their being. And something like what is imposed on them by a physical necessity, the Christian has to do by a spiritual one. It is by ever and anon ascending up to God, by rising through prayer into a loftier, purer region for supplies of Divine grace, that he maintains his spiritual life. Prevent these animals from rising to the surface, and they die for want of breath; prevent him from rising to God, and he dies for want of prayer. "Give me children," cried Rachel, "or else I die." Let me breathe, says a man gasping, or else I die. Let me pray, says the Christian, or else I die.—*Guthrie.*

(ε) Get some Christian friend (whom thou mayest trust above others) to be thy faithful monitor. Oh, that man hath a great help for the maintaining the power of godliness that has an open-hearted friend that dare speak his heart to him. A stander-by sees more sometimes by a man than the *actor* can do by himself, and is more fit to judge of his actions than he of his own; sometimes self-love blinds us in our own cause, that we see not our own cause, that we see not ourselves so bad as we are; and sometimes we are over-suspicious of the worst by ourselves, which makes us appear to ourselves worse than we are. Now, that thou mayest not deprive thyself of so great help from thy friend, be sure to keep thy heart ready with meekness to receive, yea, with thankfulness embrace a reproof from his mouth. Those that cannot bear plain-dealing hurt themselves most; for by this they seldom hear the truth.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(ζ) The more we defer, the more difficult and painful our work must needs prove; every day will both enlarge our task and diminish our ability to perform it. Sin is never at a stay; if we do not retreat from it, we shall advance in it, and the farther on we go, the more we have to come back; every step we take forward (even before we can return hither, into the state wherein we are at present) must be repeated; all the web we spin must be unravelled.

Vice, as it groweth in age, so it improveth in stature and strength; from a puny child it soon waxeth a lusty stripling, then riseth to be a sturdy man, and after awhile becometh a massy giant, whom we shall scarce dare to encounter, whom we shall be very hardly able to vanquish; especially seeing that as it groweth taller and stouter, so we shall dwindle and prove more impotent, for it feedeth upon our vitals, and thriveth by our decay; it waxeth mighty by stripping us of our best forces, by enfeebling our reason, by perverting our will, by corrupting our temper, by debasing our courage, by seducing all our appetites and passions to a treacherous compliance with itself: every day our mind groweth more blind, our will more resty, our spirit more faint, our passions more headstrong and untamable; the power and empire of sin do strangely by degrees encroach, and continually get ground upon us, till it hath quite subdued and enthralled us. First we learn to bear it; then we come to like it; by and by we contract a friendship with it; then we dote upon it; at last we become enslaved to it in a bondage, which we shall hardly be able, or willing, to shake off; when not only our necks are fitted to the yoke, our hands are manacled, and our feet shackled thereby, but our heads and hearts do conspire in a base submission thereto, when vice hath made such impression on us, when this pernicious weed hath taken so deep root in our mind, will, and affection, it will demand an extremely toilsome labour to extirpate it. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

Repentance is entirely in God's disposal

This grace is in the soul from God, as light is in the air from the sun, by continual emanation; so that God may shut or open His hands, contract or diffuse, set forth or suspend the influence of it as He pleases. And if God gives not repenting grace, there will be a hard heart and a dry eye, maugre all the poor frustraneous endeavours of nature. A piece of brass may as easily melt, or a flint bewater itself, as the heart of man, by any innate power of its own, resolve itself into a penitential humiliation. If God does not, by an immediate blow of His omnipotence, strike the rock, these waters will never gush out. The Spirit blows where it listeth, and if that blows not, these showers can never fall.

And now, if the matter stands so, how does the impenitent sinner know but that God, being provoked by his present impenitence, may irreversibly propose within Himself to seal up these fountains, and shut him up under hardness of heart and reprobation of sense? And then farewell all thoughts of repentance for ever.—*South*, 1633–1716.

A Plain Command.

i. 16. *Cease to do evil.*

One of the pretexts by which wicked men endeavour to excuse their neglect of religion is, that many of the doctrines of the Bible are mysterious. They are so necessarily, and that they are so is one proof that the Bible is from God. But however mysterious the doctrines of Scripture may be, its precepts are plain enough. How plain is the command of our text! No man can even pretend that he does not understand it. If he does not obey it, he will not be able to plead that it is beyond his comprehension. We have— **I. A universal requirement.** Certain of the precepts of Scripture concern only certain classes of individuals (sovereigns, subjects, husbands, wives, &c.), but this command concerns us all. Your name is written above it, and it is a message for *you*. **II. A most reasonable requirement.** It is wrong that needs justification, not right. The worst man in the community will admit that he *ought* to "cease to do evil." And he *can*, if he will, not in his own strength, but in that which God is ever ready to impart to every man who desires to turn from sin. And not only ought and can men "cease to do evil," it will be to their advantage to do so. Sin has its "pleasures," but they are but "for a season," and they are succeeded by pains and penalties so intense that the pleasures will be altogether forgotten. To exhort men to "cease to do evil" is to exhort them to cease laying the foundation for future misery (α). On every ground, therefore, this is a most reasonable **requirement. III. A comprehensive requirement.** It is not from certain forms of evil, merely, but from evil in all its forms, that we are required to abstain. "Cease to do *evil!*" (β). Sin must be utterly forsaken! not great and flagrant sins only, but also what are called "little sins" (γ). These destroy more than great sins (δ). One sin is enough to keep us enslaved to Satan (ε). **IV. An imperative requirement.** This is not a counsel, which we are at liberty to accept or reject; it is a command, which we disobey at our peril; a command of One who has full power to make His authority respected. **V. A very elementary requirement.** Men who have laid aside certain evil habits, such as drunkenness, swearing, &c., are apt to plume themselves on what they have done, and to regard themselves as paragons of virtue. But this is a mistake. Ceasing to do evil is but the beginning of a better life; it is but the pulling up of the weeds in a garden, and much more than this is needed before "a garden" can be worthy of the name. Those who have ceased to do evil must "learn to do well" (ζ).

(α) As where punishment is there was sin; so where sin is there will be, there must be, punishment. "If thou dost ill," saith God to Cain, "sin lies at thy door" (Gen. iv. 7). *Sin*, that is, *punishment* for sin: they are so inseparable, that one word implies both; for the doing ill is the sin, that is within doors; but the suffering ill is the punishment, and that lies like a fierce mastiff at the door, and is ready to fly in our throat when we look forth.

and, if it do not then seize upon us, yet it dogs us at the heels; and will be sure to fasten upon us at our greatest disadvantage: *Tum gravior cum tarda venit*, &c. Joseph's brethren had done heinously ill: what becomes of their sin? it makes no noise, but follows them slily and silently in the wilderness: it follows them home to their father's house; it follows them into Egypt. All this while there is no news of it; but when it found them cooped up three days in Pharaoh's ward, now it bays at them, and flies in their faces. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul," &c. (Gen. xlii. 21).

What should I instance in that, whereof not Scripture, not books, but the whole world, is full—the inevitable sequences of sin and punishment? Neither can it be otherwise. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" saith Abraham. *Right*, is to give every one his due: wages is due to work; now "the wages of sin is death:" So then, it stands upon no less ground than very necessary and essential justice to God, that where wickedness hath led the way, there punishment must follow.—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(β) There may be a forsaking of a particular sin that has been delightful and predominant without sincerity towards God, for another lust may have got possession of the heart, and take the throne. There is an alternate succession of appetites in the corrupt nature, according to the change of men's temper or interests in the world. As seeds sown in that order in a garden, that 'tis always full of a succession of fruits and herbs in season; so original sin that is sown in our nature is productive of divers lusts, some in the spring, others in the summer of our age, some in the autumn, others in the winter. Sensual lusts flourish in youth, but when mature age has cooled these desires, worldly lusts succeed; in old age there is no relish for sensuality, but covetousness reigns imperiously. Now he that expels one sin and entertains another continues in a state of sin; 'tis but exchanging one familiar for another; or, to borrow the prophet's expression, "'Tis as one should fly from a lion, and meet with a bear that will as certainly devour him."—*Salter.*

(γ) Thou dost not hate sin if thou only hatest some one sin. All iniquity will be distasteful in thy sight if God the Holy Spirit has really made thee to loathe iniquity. If I say to a person, "I will not receive you into my house when you come dressed in such a coat;" but if I open the door to him when he has on another suit which is more respectable, it is evident that my objection was not to the person, but to his clothes. If a man will not cheat when the transaction is open to the world, but will do so in a more secret way, or in a kind of adulteration which is winked at in the trade, the man does not hate cheating, he only hates that kind of it which is sure to be found out; he likes the thing itself very well. Some sinners, they say they hate sin. Not at all; sin in its essence is pleasing enough; it is only a glaring shape of it which they dislike. —*Spurgeon.*

If we would realise the full force of the term "hatred of evil," as it ought to exist in all, as it would exist in a perfectly righteous man, we shall do well to consider how sensitive we are to natural evil in its every form to pain and suffering and misfortune. How delicately is the physical frame of man constructed, and how keenly is the slightest derangement in any part of it felt! A little mote in the eye, hardly discernible by the eye of another, the swelling of a small gland, the deposit of a small grain of sand, what agonies may these slight causes inflict! That fine filament of nerves of feeling spread like a wonderful network of gossamer over the whole surface of the body, how exquisitely susceptible is it! A trifling burn, or scald, or incision, how does it cause the member affected to be drawn back suddenly, and the patient to cry out! Now there can be no question that if man were in a perfectly moral state, moral evil would affect his mind as sensibly and in as lively a manner—would, in short, be as much of an affliction to him, as pain is to his physical frame. He would shrink and snatch himself away, as sin came near to his consciousness; the first entrance of it into his imagination would wound and arouse his moral sensibilities, and make him positively unhappy.—*Goulburn.*

(δ) The worst sin is not some outburst of gross transgression, forming an exception to the ordinary tenor of a life, bad and dismal as such a sin is; but the worst and most fatal are the small continuous vices which root underground and honeycomb the soul. Many a man who thinks himself a Christian is in more danger from the daily commission, for example, of small pieces of sharp practice in his business, than ever was David at his worst. White ants pick a carcase clean sooner than a lion will.—*Maclaren.*

(ε) As an eagle, though she enjoy her wings and beak, is wholly prisoner if she be held but by one talon; so are we, though we could be delivered of all habit of sin, in bondage still, if vanity hold us but by a silken thread.—*Donne*, 1573–1631.

Ships, when the tide rises and sets strongly in any direction, sometimes turn and seem as if they would go out upon it. But they only head that way, and move from side to side, swaying and swinging without moving on at all. There seems to be nothing to hinder them from sailing and floating out to sea; but there is something. Down under the water a great anchor lies buried in the mud. The ship cannot escape. The anchor holds her. And thus are men holden by the cords of their own sins. They go about trying to discover some way to be forgiven, and yet keep good friends with the devil that is in them.—*Beecher.*

(δ) Thou hast laid down the commission of an evil, but hast thou taken up thy known duty? He is a bad husbandman that drains his ground, and then neither sows nor plants it. It's all one if it had been under water as drained and not improved. What if thou cease to do evil (if it were possible) and thou learn'st not to do well? 'Tis not thy fields being clear of weeds, but fruitful in corn, pays thy rent, and brings thee in thy profit; nor thy not being drunk, unclean, or any other sin, but thy being holy, gracious, thy having faith unfeigned, pure love, and the other graces which will prove thee sound, and bring in evidence for thy interest in Christ, and through Him of heaven.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

The Great Task.

i. 17. *Learn to do well.*

Negative goodness is not enough to meet the Divine requirements. Those who have "ceased to do evil" must "learn to do well." God demands positive excellence (α). The cultivation of well-doing is the surest guarantee against evil-doing (β).

I. Well-doing is a thing to be learned. We have been too prone to look at it in its other aspect only, as a thing springing from faith and love, not as a thing to be cultivated. But see Phil. iv. 9; 1 Tim. v. 4; Titus iii. 14; Matt. xi. 29; Heb. v. 3. All *experience* is in accordance with the teaching of these texts. Has any case occurred in which at the beginning of the Christian life a person was proficient in well-doing? Men are not born into the Christian life with a perfect capacity to *do* well, any more than they are born into the natural life with a perfect capacity to *speak* well. Conversion is a beginning, not an ending (γ). We then begin to learn the standards, methods, opportunities, and practice of excellence. In the hour of conversion we do but pass into Christ's school, and begin to be His *disciples*. Well-doing is not to be learned in one lesson, nor in six lessons. [*Illustration:* frequent advertisement, "French in six lessons." Absurd!] It was only after a prolonged training and most varied discipline that St. Paul could say, "I have *learned* in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Is *that* a lesson to be acquired in a day? Let our own hearts supply further proof. Look within, and see the evils yet unsubdued, the excellences yet unattained, the difficulty with which many a duty is discharged, and you will see the necessity of *learning* to do well. We have *learned* to do well only when it has become a *habit* to us, when we do it as easily and naturally as a well-trained merchant's clerk adds up a column of figures correctly. But can any *habit* be acquired without prolonged practice? (δ)

II. Well-doing is learned much in the same way as other things are learned. Learning a language involves study, patience, perseverance, practice. Not otherwise can we learn to do well (ε).

III. In learning to do well, we need both inspiration and help. We have both: the *inspiration* in the example of our Lord (Acts x. 38; Heb. xii. 2); the *help* in the gracious assistance of the Holy Ghost (Rom. viii. 26). Therefore, difficult as the task is, we may address ourselves to it with good hope of success.—*William Jones.*

(α) All the religion of some men runs upon *nots*. "I am not as this publican." That ground is nought, though it brings not forth briars and thorns, if it yieldeth not good increase. Not only the unruly servant (Matt. xxiv. 48, 49) is cast into hell, but also the *idle* servant (Matt. xxv. 30). Meroz is cursed not for opposing and fighting, but for not helping. Dives did not take away food from Lazarus, but he did not give him any of his crumbs. "I set up no other gods;" ay, but dost thou reverence and obey the true God? "I do not profane the Sabbath." Dost thou sanctify it? Thou dost not wrong thy parents; but dost thou reverence them? Thou dost not murder; but dost thou do good to thy neighbour? Usually men cut off half of their bill, as the unjust steward bade the man who owed a hundred set down fifty. We do not think of sins of omission. If we are no drunkards, adulterers, and profane persons, we do not think what it is to omit respects to God, not to reverence His holy majesty, not to delight in Him and His ways.—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(β) Fighting faults is the most discouraging

thing in the world. When corn reaches a certain height, no more weeds can grow among it. The corn overshadows and grows them down. Let men fill themselves full of good things. Let them make their love and purity and kindness grow up like corn, that every evil and noxious thing within them may be overshadowed and die.—*Beecher.*

(γ) No man is born into the full Christian character, any more than he is born into the character of a man when he comes into the world. A man at conversion is in the state of one who has just come into the possession of an old homestead. He has the title, and he can make for himself a beautiful home. But the dust, the dirt, and the cobwebs of years choke all the rooms, and must be cleared away. Many sills and beams are rotten, and must be replaced by new ones. Chambers must be refitted, walls newly plastered, the whole roof must be searched over, and every leak stopped. There must be a thorough cleansing and repair before the mansion is habitable; and when all this is done, it is only *an empty house* that the man has. The same kind of thing that man has *who has trained himself into freedom from wrong, without having become faithful in right deeds.*—*Beecher.*

(δ) Character is consolidated habit, and habit forms itself by repeated action. Habits are like paths beaten hard and clear by the multitude of light footsteps which go to and fro. The daily restraint or indulgence of the nature, in the business, in the home, in the imagination, which is the inner laboratory of the life, creates the character which, whether it be here or there, settles the destiny.—*J. Baldwin Brown.*

(ε) It is not great, or special, or extraordinary experiences which constitute in the best sense the *religious* character. It is the uniform daily walk with God, serving Him in little things as well as great—in the ordinary duties and everyday avocations, as well as in the midst of grave and eventful contingencies. As the sublimest symphony is made up of separate single notes;—as the wealth of the cornfield is made up of separate stalks, or rather of separate grains;—as the magnificent texture, with its gorgeous combinations of colour, is made up of individual threads;—as the mightiest avalanche that ever came thundering down from its Alpine throne, uprooting villages and forests, is made up of tiny snowflakes;—so it is with the spiritual life. That life is itself the grandest illustration of the power of littles. Character is the product of daily, hourly actions, words, thoughts; daily forgivenesses, unselfishnesses, kindnesses, sympathies, charities, sacrifices for the good of others, struggles against temptations, submissiveness under trial. Oh it is these, like the blending colours in a picture, or the blending notes of music, which constitute the man.—*Macduff.*

THE NOBLEST ART.

i. 17. *Learn to do well.*

I. To do well is a thing that requires to be learned. 1. *It does not come to us naturally,* as breathing and sleeping do. That which comes to us naturally is to do evil. This is manifest in every child: it needs no teaching to do evil, but it needs a great deal of teaching before it will habitually do well. Nor does proficiency in well-doing come to us even with our new birth. Then come new desires after righteousness, but the knowledge and practice of righteousness have to be learned (α). At our new birth we are *born* "babes in Christ:" manhood in Christ is reached only by *growth* (β). 2. *It is not a thing we acquire unconsciously,* as infants learn to see and hear, or as older persons acquire the accent of the country in which they reside, or as invalids gain health at the seaside. Living in a religious atmosphere will not of itself make us religious, nor will mere companionship with good men. Association with artists will not of itself make a man an artist; and association with Christians will not of itself make any man a Christian. Judas was in constant association with Christ himself for more than three years, and at the end of that period, instead of doing well, he committed the foulest of all crimes. To do well is an *art,* and, like every other art, it can be mastered only by deliberate efforts of the will (γ). This is the testimony both of *Scripture* and *experience.* (See preceding outline.)

II. To do well is a thing that may be learned. Not all persons, however earnest their desires or persevering their efforts, can become poets, painters, statesmen, orators. But to do well is an art in which all regenerate persons may become proficient, some with greater ease than others, but to none is the task impossible. There is no vice which a regenerate man may not

lay aside, no excellence to which he may not attain.

III. To do well is a thing that must be learned. It is an imperative demand which God makes upon all His people. We cannot satisfy it by "ceasing to do evil." It is not enough for the "branches" of the True Vine not to bring forth "wild grapes;" they must bear *fruit—much* fruit—to the glory of the Husbandman (John xv. 8). Not only must Christ's followers be "blameless," they must be *conspicuous* for excellence. "Let your *light* so SHINE before men that they may *see* your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." These truths being settled in our minds, let us ask ourselves.

IV. How this noblest of arts may be acquired. 1. *By setting before ourselves, and carefully studying, the noblest models.* Thus do those who would become proficient in other arts: music, painting, sculpture, architecture, &c. Now the great Master in the art of well-doing was our Lord Jesus Christ: we must therefore study Him and His works. But as it is often a help to the discovery of the secrets of a great master's excellences to study the works of his disciples, as thus our attention is sometimes directed to points we might otherwise overlook, and as by the contrast between him and them, even when they have done their best, we get a clearer view of his transcendent power—so it will be helpful to us to study the character of Christ's noblest disciples (*δ*), — always, however, coming back to the study of *His* character, remembering that we shall succeed in doing well only in proportion as we become like *Him*. 2. *By becoming imbued with the principles by which the great masters in this art were animated.* Mere mechanical imitation is always a poor thing, and often a grotesque and pitiable thing; because circumstances are continually varying. What kind of an English home would the most exact reproduction of the most beautiful of all classic villas be? The architect who forgot that the climate of England is not that of Rome or Athens would be accounted a fool. Yet many professed imitators of Christ have fallen into a similar mistake: they have imitated merely the outward circumstances of His life, and have forgotten that the essential thing is to have "the *mind* that was in Christ." When we have *that*, all else will follow as a matter of course. Now the great principle which governed Christ and His noblest disciples was love—love to God and man: a *docile* love, which did not seek to please God in *its* way, but in *His* way, and evermore searched the Scriptures to discover upon what things God looks with delight. 3. *By patient and persevering endeavours to embody in our practice the truths we have thus discovered.* Only by such endeavours can the mastery in any art be won. 4. *By fidelity in little things.* The master's ease is reached only by the student's painstaking—by his careful endeavour to be *right* in each individual note, line, shade, stroke, word. It is *thus*, and thus only, that the *habit* of doing well is gained.

V. Let us remember certain things for our encouragement. 1. *We are not left to learn this art alone:* we have the constant help of the most reasonable, patient, and successful of all teachers. We are disciples of *Christ*. How much that means! He does not expect us to become proficients in a few lessons. He remembers that the most advanced of us are only little children in His great school. If He sees in us the earnest *desire* and the resolute *endeavour* to learn, He is well satisfied (*ε*). He will most carefully adapt His methods of instruction to our individual capacity. He will lead us on to the goal step by step. Already in countless thousands of instances He has dealt successfully with most intractable materials: scholars who seemed hopelessly dull and inapt He has so instructed that they have passed the great examination that awaits us all at death; and they are now carrying on their studies in the great university of heaven. 2. *In no other art does progress bring so much happiness:* the testimony of a good conscience; consciousness of the approval of God; a pleasant retrospect; brightening hopes. 3. *In no*

other art does proficiency ensure such rich rewards. Proficiency in any other art can but win for us the honours and joys of earth; proficiency in this will secure for us the honours and joys of heaven. It is one great doctrine of Scripture, that we are *saved* through our faith: it is another, that we are *rewarded* according to our works.

(α) The process of being born again is like that which a portrait goes through under the hand of the artist. When a man is converted, he is but the outline sketch of a character which he is to fill up. He first lays in the dead colouring. Then comes the work of laying in the colours, and he goes on, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, blending them, and heightening the effect. It is a life's work; and when he dies he is still laying in and blending the colours, and heightening the effect. And if men suppose the work is done when they are converted, why should we expect anything but lopsided Christian character?—*Beecher.*

Who starts up a finished Christian? The very best men come from their graves, like Lazarus, "bound with grave-clothes"—not like Jesus, who left the death-dress behind Him; and, alas! in their remaining corruptions all carry some of these cerements about with them, nor drop them but at the gate of heaven.—*Guthrie.*

(β) God deals in spiritual proceedings, as in natural, to extremes by the mean. We are not born old men; but first an infant, then a man, then old. We are conceived of immortal seed, born of the Spirit, so go on to perfection. There is first a seed, then a plant, then a tree. We get not at one jump into heaven, nor at one stroke kill the enemy.—*Adams*, 1653.

(γ) Cast a sponge into water, and, the fluid filling its empty cells, it swells out before our eyes, increases more and more. There is no effort here, and could be none; for though once a living animal, the sponge is now dead and dry. But it is not as sponges fill with water, nor to use a Scripture figure often employed, and sometimes misapplied, as Gideon's fleece was filled with dews, that God's people are replenished with His grace. More is needed than simply to bring ourselves in contact with ordinances, to read the Bible, to repair on Sabbath to Church, to sit down in communion seasons at the Lord's table.—*Guthrie.*

(δ) God hath provided and recommended to us one example as a perfect standard of good practice—the example of our Lord. That indeed is the most universal, absolute, and assured pattern; yet doth it not supersede the use of other examples. Not only the valour and conduct of the general, but those of inferior officers, yea the resolution of common soldiers, doth serve to animate their fellows. The stars have their season to guide us as well as the sun; especially when our eyes are so weak as hardly to bear the day. Even considering our infirmity, inferior examples by their imperfection sometimes have a peculiar advantage. Our Lord's most imitable practice did proceed from an immense virtue of Divine grace which we cannot arrive to; it is in itself so perfect and high, that we may not ever reach it: looking upon it may therefore sometimes dazzle and discourage our weakness. But other good men had assistance in measure such as we may hope to approach unto; they were subject to the difficulties which we feel; they were exposed to the perils of falling which we fear; we may therefore hope to march on in a reasonable distance after them; we may, by help of the same grace, come near in transcribing their less exact copy.—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(ε) Gotthold observed a boy in a writing-school eyeing attentively the line placed before him, and labouring to write with equal correctness and beauty. Mark, said he to the bystanders, how all perfection is the offspring of imperfection, and how by frequent mistakes we learn to do well. It is not required of this boy that his penmanship shall equal that of the line. He satisfies his master by the pains he takes; for these are a ground of hope that he will progressively improve, and at last learn to write with rapidity and elegance. We also have a pattern to copy. It has been left us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and is His most perfect and holy life. And think not that He exacts more from us than the teacher does from the pupil. No, indeed; if He find us carefully studying His example, and diligent in our endeavours to imitate it, He exercises forbearance towards our faults, and by His grace and Spirit daily strengthens us to amend.—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

The Oppressed and their Relief.

i. 17. *Relieve the oppressed.*

Religion means sympathy with man in his oppressed condition. The truth alone can give men freedom. **I. The oppressed.** 1. *There are those oppressed by sinful habits.* Many men are their own tyrants. They build their own prison, make their own fetters, and whip themselves. Their oppression is the consequence of their sin. Such are to be relieved, however little they may appear to desire or deserve it, by the compassion of the good. 2. *There are those oppressed by commercial difficulty.* There are many men whose commercial

fife is one continuous struggle to get on, and to provide things honest in the sight of the world. They have small capital. Fortune seems against them. They are active, but they do not succeed. Such ought to be relieved by the generous consideration of the good. 3. *There are those oppressed by domestic misfortune.* The wife has lost her husband. The children have buried their parents. They are out alone in the wide world. They are liable to the thoughtless but stern oppression of men. Such must be relieved by the good. 4. *There are those oppressed by religious bigotry.* There are many great souls who are larger than a sect, oppressed by the conventionally orthodox. They are driven from their pulpits. They are excommunicated from their synagogue. They need the relief of true sympathy. II. Their relief. 1. *By personal sympathy* (α). Genuine sympathy is always a relief to an oppressed soul (β). It heals the soul and lightens its burden (γ). A kind word, a cheering look, is welcome to the oppressed. 2. *By intelligent advocacy.* The cause of the oppressed should be advocated where it is likely to be redressed. Politics can be employed in no higher ministry than in seeking the relief of the oppressed. 3. *By practical help.* Sympathy must not be substituted for personal and self-denying help. Words are well; smiles are welcome; but personal help is the most effective to the removal of oppression.—*J. S. Exell.*

(α) We are all sons of one Father, members of one body, and heirs of one kingdom, in respect of which near-linking together there should be compassion and sympathy betwixt us. If one member do but grieve, all suffer with it. When a thorn is got into the foot, how is it that the back bows, the eyes pry into the hurt, and the hands are busied to pluck out the cause of the anguish? And we, being members of one another, should bear with and forbear one the other, the not doing whereof will stick as a brand upon our souls that we are of the number of them that have forsaken the fear of the Almighty.—*Spencer*, 1658.

(β) Certain it is, that as nothing can better do it, so there is nothing greater, for which God made our tongues, next to reciting His praises, than to minister comfort to a weary soul. And what greater pleasure can we have than that we should bring joy to our brother, who, with his dreary eyes, looks to heaven and round about, and cannot find so much rest as to lay his eyelids close together, than that thy tongue should be tuned with heavenly accents, and make the weary soul to listen for light and ease; and when he perceives that there is such a thing in the world, and in the order of things as comfort and joy, to begin to break out from the prison of his sorrows, at the door of sighs and tears, and, by little and little, melts into showers and refreshment? This is glory to thy voice and employment fit for the brightest angel. But so have I seen the sun kiss the frozen earth, which was bound up with images of death, and the colder breath of the north; and then the waters break from their enclosures, and melt with joy, and run in useful channels; and the flies do rise again from their little graves in the walls, and dance awhile in the air, to tell that there is joy within, and that the great mother of creatures will open the stock of her new refreshment, become useful to mankind, and sing praises to her Redeemer: so is the heart of a sorrowful man under the discourses of a wise comforter; he breaks from the despairs of the grave, and the fetters and chains of sorrow; he blesses God, and he blesses thee, and he feels his life returning: for to be miserable is death, but nothing is life but to be comforted: and God is pleased with no music from below so much as in the thanksgiving songs of relieved widows, of supported orphans, of rejoicing and comforted and thankful persons.—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(γ) Till we have reflected on it, we are scarcely aware how much the sum of human happiness in the world is indebted to this one feeling—sympathy. We get cheerfulness and vigour, we scarcely know how or when, from mere association with our fellow-men; and from the looks reflected on us of gladness and enjoyment we catch inspiration and power to go on, from human presence and from cheerful looks. The workman works with added energy from having others by. The full family circle has a strength and a life peculiarly its own. The substantial good and the effectual relief which men extend to one another is trifling. It is not by these, but by something far less costly, that the work is done. God has ensured it by a much more simple machinery. He has given to the weakest and the poorest power to contribute largely to the common stock of gladness. The child's smile and laugh are mighty powers in this world. When bereavement has left you desolate, what substantial benefit is there which makes condolence acceptable? It cannot replace the loved ones you have lost. It can bestow upon you nothing permanent. But a warm hand has touched yours, and its thrill told you that there was a living response there to your emotion. One look, one human sigh, has done more for you than the costliest present could convey.—*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

God's Ideal of Goodness.

i. 17. *Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

This verse is more correctly translated thus—"*Learn to do well; seek judgment, restrain the oppressor, right the fatherless, maintain the cause of the widow*,"—or, "*Learn to do good; seek out judgment, redress wrong, judge the fatherless, befriend the widow*."

The form of these admonitions was determined by the sins of which the rulers of Jerusalem had been guilty. By them the course of justice had been perverted (ver. 23; Micah iii. 11, &c.); wrongs had been left unredressed, and oppressors unrestrained; the orphans and the widows, having neither money to bribe nor power to overawe the corrupt judges, had sought in vain for justice,—such judges as our Lord has depicted in His parable (Luke xviii. 2) were common. The four specific admonitions of this verse are a divinely-inspired exposition of the general admonition with which it commences. So regarded, we find in it *God's ideal of goodness*. The command is given, "Learn to do well." Yes, but what is meant by learning to do well? "To do well," says the prophet, is "to seek out judgment, to restrain the oppressor, to judge the fatherless, to befriend the widow."

This Divine ideal of goodness is in startling opposition to certain standards of excellence widely accepted both in the Church and in the world. It is in opposition (1) to the idea that *a good man is one who does no harm*. How prevalent is the notion that a man who refrains from injuring his neighbours is a person worthy of high commendation! But to do no harm merely is to fall far short of the Scripture standard of excellence (α). It is in opposition (2) to the idea that *a man who confines himself to the cultivation of personal virtues is a true follower of Christ*. In all our Churches there are multitudes of persons whose "religion" is a purely selfish consideration. They have been taught that certain excellences are necessary to qualify them for admission to heaven, and to the cultivation of these excellences they address themselves assiduously, merely that they may secure their own eternal well-being. But such persons fail to observe that the mind that was in Christ was not a spirit of self-seeking but of self-sacrifice. It is in opposition (3) to the idea that *the more spiritual a man is, the more indifferent he will be to what happens in the world*. It is precisely to concern as to what happens in the world that we are here called. We are to "seek out justice," to use all our influence that justice and righteousness shall prevail in the community in which we dwell. We are not simply to mourn over wrongs; we are to redress them, and we are to restrain the oppressors. Especially are we to see to it that justice is done to the orphans, and to all helpless ones such as they. The widow we are to befriend; she is to be our "client," and we are to see to it that she is not wronged because God has been pleased to remove her natural defender. To live thus for others, to be the friend of the friendless, the defender of the weak, the resolute opposer of all oppressors,—this, and this only, is to realise the Divine ideal of goodness (β).

Application.—1. *Men are good precisely in proportion as they are like God* (γ). Between a merely "harmless" man and God there is no resemblance. Between a man who lives only to secure his own well-being and God there is a positive contrast. Between a man who is indifferent to the sorrows and the wrongs of his fellow-men there is a still greater contrast. He is not indifferent to what takes place on earth. It is His supreme glory that He burns with indignation against oppression, and that He is the friend especially of the friendless and the weak (Ps. cxlvi. 7–9; cxlvii. 2–6). It is to resemblance to Him in these things, and not merely in abstinence from evil, that we are called (James i.

27). 2. *A selfish life is a godless life.* Men may be eminently respectable members of society, and highly esteemed members of churches, and yet be utterly unlike God. Men who live only for themselves, or to promote the happiness merely of their own households, and selfishly decline to take any part in philanthropic labours, or in social and political movements which have for their object the removal of public wrongs, are utterly out of sympathy with Him upon whose approval they reckon so confidently and so mistakenly. Had they any true love for God, they would have an unselfish love for men, and would be quick to feel and to resent the wrongs that are done them (1 John iii. 14, &c.) Dives was probably a highly respectable citizen of Jerusalem, and on good terms with the authorities of the temple, but the selfishness of his life sufficed at the last to exclude him from the Divine presence (δ). 3. *A godlike life can never be a life of ease.* How many members of our churches have incurred Christ's woe! (Luke vi. 26). Prudent men, they have been careful never to "meddle" in affairs of their neighbours; they have never identified themselves with any revolutionary movements; against wrongs which have not troubled themselves they have never uttered words of flaming indignation! And yet they imagine themselves to be followers of Him who spoke of "the cross" which each of His disciples would have to carry. What He meant by this saying is a mystery to them. But let them begin to endeavour to "learn to do well" in the manner pointed out in the text, and this saying of His will be a mystery to them no longer. The world will very soon hate them even as it hated Him. But this is one of the surest signs that we are His (John xv. 18, 19).

(α) He is not half a saint who is but a negative saint. The forbearance of gross corruptions is the easiest and least part of religion, and therefore will not speak any man in a state of salvation. The tree that is barren and without good fruit is for the fire, as well as the tree that brings forth evil fruit.

For men to think to excuse themselves that they do no hurt, wrong neither man, woman, or child, and are not, as the Pharisee said, as the publicans, who generally were oppressors, is but a vain, foolish thing. The idle servant might have said, "Lord, I did no harm with my talent; I did not lay it out in rioting and drunkenness, or any way to Thy dishonour; I only hid it, and did not improve it,"—yet this was enough to condemn him. Can we call ground good ground for bearing no weeds, if it never bring forth good corn? Or do we count that servant a good servant who doth not wrong his master in his estate by purloining or wasting it, if he live idle all day, and neglect the business his master appoints him? —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(β) A religion that does not take hold of the life that now is, is like a cloud that does not rain. A cloud may roll in grandeur, and be an object of admiration, but if it does not rain, it is of little account so far as utility is concerned. And a religion that consists in the observance of magnificent ceremonies, but that does not touch the duties of daily life, is a religion of show and of sham.—*Beecher.*

(γ) To be godly is to be godlike. The full accord of all the soul with His character, in whom, as their native home, dwell "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely," and the full conformity of the will to His sovereign will, who is the life of our lives—this, and nothing shallower, nothing narrower, is religion in its perfection, and the measure in which we have attained to this harmony with God is the measure in which we are Christians. As two stringed instruments may be so tuned to one keynote that if you strike the one, a faint ethereal echo is heard from the other, which blends undistinguishably with its parent sound; so drawing near to God, and brought into unison with His mind and will, our responsive spirits vibrate in accord with His, and give forth tones, low and thin indeed, but still repeating the mighty music of heaven.—*Maclaren.*

(δ) They are selfish—because they have no motive of action beyond themselves. They individualise existence. The spider weaves a web, and that is its world. It retires into its corner for observation, and has no concern for any surrounding objects, except as they may be caught upon its net, and appropriated to its use. So they who live without God reticulate life with selfishness. Nothing concerns them except as it may be drawn into the mesh of scheming for ministering to their own wants and wishes.—*Bellew.*

God's Gracious Invitation to Sinners.

i. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

It is scarcely possible to conceive of a more interesting and delightful exhibition of the love and mercy of God than is presented to us in these words; unless they had been found in the volume of eternal truth, we might have justly doubted their veracity. For the speaker is Jehovah, a Being infinitely happy and glorious in Himself. He needs not, on His own account, the return of the sinner to Himself. Besides, He is the offended party. How marvellous, then, that He should stoop to ask reconciliation with poor wretched man, the rebel and traitor against heaven. Notice—**I. The characters addressed.** Not such as excel in moral excellency, but the vilest and most degraded of sinners. How apt we are to think that such are past reclamation. Yet it is to these that the invitation of our text is addressed—those whose sins are as scarlet and crimson. This description includes—1. *Those whose sins are glaring and manifest.* In the heart of men there is much evil that man or angel never sees. External circumstances act in the moral world as the shore to the ocean, limiting and bounding its waters. The control thus exerted upon men is well for them, for society, and for the Church. But numbers cast it off, sin in open day, and glory in their shame. Their sins are as scarlet or as crimson. 2. *Those whose iniquities are specially productive of much evil and misery*—ringleaders in sin; ridiculers of piety, who labour to throng the road to hell; ungodly masters; ungodly heads of households, &c. 3. *Those who have sinned against great privileges and mercies* (Matt. xi. 20–24.) As it is with nations and cities, so it is with individuals (α). How many have had privileges of a high character—pious parents, religious society, a faithful ministry, special providences, &c. 4. *Backsliders*, who by their fall have hardened others in iniquity, and caused them to scoff at religion. 5. *Aged transgressors.* **II. The invitation presented.** "Come and let us reason," &c. He wishes to have your state and condition tested by reason. He gives you opportunities of self-defence; he is willing to hear all your motives, arguments, &c. Now, will you come to God, and reason with Him? What will you say? 1. *You cannot plead ignorance.* You have seen the evil of your way, and yet have chosen it. 2. *You cannot plead necessity.* The Jews of old declared that they were not free agents, and that they could not help committing the sins of which they were guilty (Jer. vii. 10). This is the grossest self-deception. It cannot be the will of God that you should do evil (1 Thess. iv. 3; James i. 13; 1 Pet. i. 16). To attribute our sins to Him is the most outrageous impiety. You have sinned freely; it has been your own act and choice. 3. *You must plead guilty.* Cast yourself on the mercy of God, pleading guilty, you shall not be condemned, if—4. *You plead the merits of Christ.* He is "the propitiation for our sin." Here is your hope, your plea. In availing yourself of this plea, all that God requires is repentance and faith. **III. The gracious promise.**—*Jabez Burns, D.D., Pulpit Cyclopædia*, iii. 161–165.

(α) All our sins are of a "crimson dye, for remember, it is not needful to have steeped our hands in a brother's blood to make our guilt "scarlet." God measures sins by privileges. One evil thought in one man is as much as a thousand crimes in another man.—*Vaughan.*

Cleansing for the Vilest.

I. 18. *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

We are informed by the Rabbins that the high priest bound a scarlet fillet round the neck of the scapegoat, and that when the priest confessed his own sins and the sins of the people, the fillet became white if the atonement was accepted by God, but that if it was not accepted, the fillet remained scarlet still. The Rabbins further say that the goat was led about twelve furlongs out of Jerusalem, where it was thrown down a precipice, and was mangled to atoms by the fall. In case of the sacrifice being received by Heaven, a scarlet ribbon which hung at the door of the temple changed from scarlet to pure white. They affirm that it is to this changing of the fillet and ribbon from scarlet to white that Isaiah refers in our text. While we regard these as fictions, and not as facts, they serve to illustrate the nature and greatness of the change spoken of in it. **I. Scarlet and crimson represent sins of excessive and glaring notoriety.** 1. The soul has been steeped in the dyeing element. 2. It has carried away as much of the dyeing quality as it can hold. It is twice dipped in the dye-vat. 3. The sins glare and arrest the eye like scarlet in the sun. As the uniform of the British soldier is most conspicuous, so these sins glare in the eye (1) of society (2) of conscience, (3) of Divine justice. **II. Scarlet and crimson symbolise the fast and permanent hold of these sins upon the soul.** 1. The sins are not a *stain* but a *dye*. 2. The sins are not superficial: they have penetrated into the fabric, every thread of which has been dyed. The faculties are the threads: the whole man the web. 3. The sins are not typified by *any* dye, but by *scarlet* and *crimson*, which are as permanent as the fabric they colour. They resist sun, dew, rain, the wash. **III. Scarlet and crimson becoming white as snow represents the perfect removal of the greatest sins.** The colouring element is removed. The soul is *restored*. The power that removes the sin yet saves the soul. *Application.*—There is hope, then, even for the vilest. The most desperately sinful need not despair (*a*).—*J. Stirling.*

(*a*) In nature there is hardly a stone that is not capable of crystallising into something purer and brighter than its normal state. Coal, by a slightly different arrangement of its particles, is capable of becoming the radiant diamond. The slag cast out from the furnace as useless waste forms into globular masses of radiating crystals. From tar and pitch the loveliest colours are now manufactured. The very mud of the road, trampled under foot as the type of all impurity, can be changed by chemical art into metals and gems of surpassing beauty; and so the most unpromising materials, the most worthless moral rubbish that men cast out and despise, may be converted by the Divine alchemy into the gold of the sanctuary, and made jewels fit for the mediatorial crown of the Redeemer. Let the case of Mary Magdalene, of John Newton, of John Bunyan, of thousands more, encourage those who are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Seek to be subjected to the same purifying process; lay yourselves open to the same spiritual influences; yield yourselves up into the hands of the Spirit to become His finished and exquisite workmanship; seek diligently a saving and sanctifying union with Christ by faith, and He will perfect that which concerneth you, and lay your stones with fair colours (Ps. lxviii. 13).—*Macmillan.*

Comfort for the Desponding.

I. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Some are kept in a desponding state—**I. By the views they entertain of the sovereignty of God and the doctrine of election.** But—1. The election of God, whatever it is, is an election *unto life*, and not unto destruction. It should therefore be a source of encouragement, not discouragement; it

should awaken hope and joy, rather than despondency. 2. God's election is *His* rule of action, not yours: yours is the Bible (α). 3. The thing you are required to believe in order to salvation is not your election, but God's truth. 4. In your present state you have nothing to do with election (β); but if you will entertain the question, the *evidence* is much more in favour of your election than against it. **II. By the views they take of certain isolated passages of Scripture** (Matt. xii. 31, 32; Heb. xii. 17; Prov. i. 24–31). Not one of these passages, rightly understood, need quench your hope. Where there is one obscure passage that seems to make against you, there is a hundred which plainly and positively tell you that if you turn you shall live, if you believe you shall be saved. **III. By an apprehension that their repentance has not been deep enough.** But—1. The genuineness of your repentance is not to be estimated by the pungency of your feelings (γ). 2. It is not the depth of your feelings that is your warrant to come to Christ. 3. Your penitential feelings will not be likely to be increased by staying away from Christ. **IV. By the fear that they have gone too far and sinned too much to be forgiven.** But, admitting the very worst you can say of yourself, there is everything in the character of God, in the work of Christ, in the power of the Spirit, in the experience of other sinners (δ), in the promises of the Bible, to inspire and sustain your hope.—*John Corbin.*

(α) Whatever the decrees of God be concerning the eternal state of men, since they are secret to us, they can certainly be no rule either of our duty or comfort. And no man hath reason to think himself rejected of God who does not find the marks of reprobation in himself—I mean an evil heart and life. By this, indeed, a man may know that he is out of God's favour for the present; but he hath no reason at all from hence to conclude that God hath from all eternity and for ever cast him off. That God calls him to repentance, and affords him the space and means of it, is a much plainer sign that God is willing to have mercy upon him, than anything else can be that God hath utterly cast him off. For men to judge of their condition by the decrees of God, which are hid from us, and not by His Word, which is near us, is as if a man wandering in the wide sea in a dark night, when the heaven is all clouded, should resolve to steer his course by the stars which he cannot see, but only guess at, and neglect the compass which is at hand, and would afford him much better and more certain direction.—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(β) We have no ground at first to trouble ourselves about God's election. "Secret things belong to God." God's revealed will is, that all who believe in Christ shall not perish. It is my duty, therefore, knowing this, to believe: by doing whereof I put that question, whether God be mine or no? out of all question, for all that believe in Christ are Christ's, and all that are Christ's are God's. It is not my duty to look to God's secret counsel, but to His open offer, invitation, and command, and thereupon adventure my soul. In war men will venture their lives, because they think some will escape, and why not they? In traffic beyond the seas many adventure a great estate, because some grow rich by a good return, though some miscarry. The husbandman adventures his seed, though sometimes the year proves so bad that he never sees it more. And shall not we make a spiritual adventure, in casting ourselves upon God, when we have so good a warrant as His command, and so good an encouragement as His promise, that He will not fail those that rely on Him?—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(γ) I see no reason to call in question the truth and sincerity of that man's repentance who hates sin and forsakes it, and returns to God and his duty, though he cannot shed tears, and express the bitterness of his soul by the same significations that a mother does in the loss of her only son. He that cannot weep like a child may resolve like a man, and that undoubtedly will find acceptance with God. Two persons walking together espy a serpent; the one shrieks and cries out at the sight of it, the other kills it. So is it with sorrow for sin: some express it by great lamentations and tears, and vehement transports of passion; others by greater and more real effects of detestation—by forsaking their sins, by mortifying and subduing their lusts; but he that kills it doth certainly best express his inward enmity against it.—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(δ) Oh who can read of a *Manasseh*, a *Magdalene*, a *Saul*, yea, an *Adam*, who undid himself and a whole world with him, in the roll of pardoned sinners, and yet turn away from the promise, out of a fear that there is not mercy in it to serve his turn? These are landmarks that show what large boundaries mercy hath set to itself, and how far it hath gone, even to take into its arms the greatest sinners that make not themselves incapable thereof by final impenitency. It were a healthful walk, poor doubting Christian, for thy soul to go this circuit, and oft see where the utmost stone is laid and boundary set by God's pardoning mercy, beyond which He will not go.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

Sin and Grace.

i. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

For an exposition of the symbolism of this verse, see note (*α*).

I. The Wonders of Divine Condescension. 1. How marvellous that God should condescend to "reason" with sinful men! Not thus do human governments deal with rebels against their authority. The stern proclamation goes forth, "Submit, or die." To admit helpless rebels to a conference on equal terms (such as "reasoning" implies) is an idea that never occurs to earthly sovereigns; but (ch. lv. 8, 9)— 2. How marvellous that God should invite sinful men to reason with Him, with a view to reconciliation with them! The result of such an investigation of their conduct could only be their condemnation; but this is not God's ultimate design. He does not desire to humiliate sinners, but to bring them to repentance and confession, in order that it may be possible for Him to pardon them. According to human standards, it would have been a great thing had God been willing to be reconciled to those who have offended Him so grievously; but how astonishing is this, that He, the offended party, should seek to reconcile the offenders to Himself. (2 Cor. v. 18, 19; John iii. 19).

II. The Possibilities of Human Sin. "Though your sins be as scarlet . . . . though they be red like crimson." Sins that take complete possession of a man, and that are conspicuous to the public eye, may be described as crimson and scarlet sins. How common such sins are! What a spectacle the human race must present to angelic eyes! Scarlet and crimson sins are more common than we are apt to suppose, because responsibility is in proportion to privilege. In proportion to the sinner's light is the sinner's guilt. Consequently that which is a trivial fault in one man may be a crimson sin in another. When an offence is contrary to a man's whole training, though it may be a small matter in the sight of man, it may be as scarlet and crimson sin in the sight of God. In these possibilities of human sin we have—**1. A reason for universal watchfulness.** Taken even in its most obvious sense, the possibility of which our text speaks is the possibility of every man. There is no human being who may not fall into crime. Many men, after living half a century blamelessly in the sight of men, suddenly yield to temptation, and are consigned to felons' cells. David was no stripling when he committed his great transgression. Said Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Yet he did it! (2 Kings viii. 13, &c.) Peter rejected Christ's warning as incredible. Therefore (Rom. xi. 20; 1 Cor. x. 12) (*β*). **2. A reason for universal humiliation and prayer.** Just because our privileges have been so great, God may put a very different estimate upon our transgressions than we are disposed to do. Therefore let us humbly seek pardon for the past, and preventing grace for the future (Ps. xix. 12, 13).

III. The Certainties of Divine Grace. "They shall be as white as snow." Where sin abounds, grace shall more abound. In God there is mercy to pardon every sin (*γ*), and grace to cleanse from every form and degree of moral pollution. Here, then, we have— **1. A reason for repentance.** There is no argument so powerful as this: God is ready to forgive. Many a prodigal has been deterred from saying, "I will arise and go to my father," by a remembrance of his father's sternness, and by a doubt as to whether his father would receive him. But no such doubt need deter *us*. We are not called to the exercises of a sorrow that will be unavailing. Our Father waits to be gracious (*δ*). Hear His solemn and touching message (ch. lv. 6, 7;

TEXT). 2. **An encouragement for those who are striving after moral purity.** Many who try to live a Christian life grow discouraged. There are discouragements that come from *without:* the constant recurrence of temptation, the unfavourable spiritual atmosphere in which they live, the glaring inconsistencies of some of the professing Christians by whom they are surrounded, the low tone of the spiritual life of those whose conduct is not so open to censure. Still sorer discouragements come from *within:* the faults that will not be shaken off; the evil tendencies that will manifest themselves; the evil thoughts that will keep welling up from the fountain of the heart, revealing its intense depravity. These things are carefully hidden from men, but God knows them, and the believer knows them, and because of them is apt to grow discouraged. It seems to him that he can never be "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." But God has declared that he shall be: God has undertaken to perfect him in purity. "Be of good courage, all ye that hope in the Lord." God is able to make all grace abound toward you, and He is faithful to all His promises. See what He has promised in our text. He has already fulfilled this promise in innumerable cases (Rev. vii. 9), and He will fulfil it in yours. Be not discouraged because your moral progress is so slow. How long does the sun shine on the fruit seemingly in vain! All the summer the peach remains hard as a stone. But the sun is *not* shining in vain. Some week in the autumn this is seen. All at once it softens and becomes ripe; not as the result of that one week's sun, but of all the sunlight and warmth of the preceding weeks. The chestnut opens in a night; but for months the opening process is going on. In a moment many chemicals seem to crystallise, but the process of crystallisation goes on long before it becomes apparent. So there is a ripening, a crystallising, a cleansing process going on in the heart of the believer: though we see it not now, yet we shall have ample proof of it by and by. In this matter walk by faith, not by sight. Be of good courage! We shall yet be "white as snow."

(*a*) Jehovah here challenges Israel to a formal trial: *nocach* is thus used in a reciprocal sense, and with the same meaning as *nishpat* in ch. xliii. 26 (Ges. § 51, 2). In such a trial Israel must lose, for Israel's self-righteousness rests upon sham righteousness; and this sham righteousness, when rightly examined, is but unrighteousness dripping with blood. It is taken for granted that this must be the result of the investigation. Israel is therefore worthy of death. Yet Jehovah will not treat Israel according to His retributive justice, but according to His free compassion. He will remit the punishment, and not only regard the sin as not existing, but change it into its very opposite. The reddest possible sin shall become, through His mercy, the purest white. On the two *hiphils* here applied to colour, see Ges. § 53, 2; though he gives the meaning incorrectly, viz., "to take a colour," whereas the words signify rather to emit a colour, not *colorem accipere*, but *colorem dare*. *Shâne*, bright red (the plural *shânim*, as in Prov. xxxi. 21, signifies materials dyed with *shâni*) and *tolâ*, warm colour, are simply different names for the same colour, viz., the crimson obtained from the cochineal insect, *color coccineus*.

The representation of the work of grace promised by God as a change from red to white is founded upon the symbolism of colours, quite as much as when the saints in the Revelation (ch. xix. 8) are described as clothed in white raiment, whilst the clothing of Babylon is purple and scarlet (ch. xvii. 4). Red is the colour of fire, and therefore of life: the blood is red because life is a fiery process. For this reason the heifer, from which the ashes of purification were obtained for those who had been defiled through contact with the dead, was to be red; and the sprinkling-bush, with which the unclean were sprinkled, was to be tied around with a band of scarlet wool. But red, as contrasted with white, the colour of light (Matt. xvii. 2), is the colour of selfish, covetous, passionate life, which is self-seeking in its nature, which goes out of itself only to destroy, and drives about with wild tempestuous violence: it is therefore the colour of wrath and sin. It is generally supposed that Isaiah speaks of red as the colour of sin, because sin ends in murder; and this is not really wrong, though it is too restricted. Sin is called red, inasmuch as it is a burning heat which consumes a man, and when it breaks forth consumes his fellow-man as well. According to the biblical view, throughout, sin stands in the same relation to what is well-pleasing to God, and wrath in the same relation to love or grace, as fire to light; and therefore as red to white, or black to white, for red and black are colours which border upon one another. In the Song of Solomon (ch. vii. 5), the black locks of Shulamith are described as being "like purple," and Homer applies the same epithet

to the dark waves of the sea. But the ground of this relation lies deeper still. Red is the colour of fire, which flashes out of darkness and returns to it again; whereas white, without any admixture of darkness, represents the pure, absolute triumph of light. It is a deeply significant symbol of the act of justification. Jehovah offers to Israel an *actio forensis*, out of which it shall come forth justified by grace, although it has merited death on account of its sins. The righteousness, white as snow and wool, with which Israel comes forth, is a gift conferred upon it out of pure compassion, without being conditional upon any legal performance whatever.—*Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah*, vol. i. pp. 98, 99.

A subordinate point in the imagery is, that scarlet and crimson were the *firmest* of dyes, least capable of being washed out.—*Dr. Kay.*

(β) The strong men are fallen; even Solomon himself, and David, and Noah, and Lot, and Samson, and Peter, the lights of the world, fell like stars from heaven. These tall cedars, strong oaks, fair pillars, lie in the dust, whose tops glittered in the air; that "they which think they stand may take heed lest they fall." Can I look upon these ruins without compassion? or remember them without fear, unless I be a reprobate, and my heart of flint? Who am I that I should stand like a shrub, when these cedars are blown down to the ground, and showed themselves but men? The best man is but a man: the worst are worse than beasts. No man is untainted but Christ. They who had greater gifts than we, they who had deeper roots than we, they who had stronger hearts than we, they who had more props than we, are fallen like a bird which is weary of her flight, and turned back like the wind, in the twinkling of an eye. What shall we do then, when we hear of other men's faults? Not talk of them as we do, but beware by them, and think—Am I better than he? Am I stronger than Samson? Am I wiser than Solomon? Am I chaster than David? Am I soberer than Noah? Am I firmer than Peter? There is no salt but may lose its saltness, no wine but may lose its strength, no flower but may lose its scent, no light but may be eclipsed, no beauty but may be stained, no fruit but may be blasted, no soul but may be corrupted. We stand all in a slippery place, where it is easy to slide and hard to get up.—*Henry Smith*, 1592.

(γ) Man may be willing to forgive a mite, the Lord a million; three hundred pence and ten thousand talents are all one to His mercy. —*Adams*, 1653.

He is rich in mercy, abundant in goodness and truth. Thy sins are like a spark of fire that falls into the ocean, it is quenched presently; so are all thy sins in the ocean of God's mercy. There is not more water in the sea than there is mercy in God.—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

Why dost thou not believe in God's mercy? Is it thy sins discourage? God's mercy can pardon great sins, nay, because they are great (Ps. xxv. 11). The sea covers great rocks as well as lesser sands.—*Watson*, 1696.

Like some black rock that heaves itself above the surface of a sunlit sea, and the wave runs dashing over it, and the spray, as it falls down its sides, is all rainbowed and lightened, and there comes beauty into the mighty grimness of the black thing; so a man's transgressions rear themselves up, and God's great love comes sweeping itself against them and over them, makes out of the sin an occasion for the flashing more brightly of the beauty of His mercy, and turns the life of the pardoned penitent into a life of which even the sin is not pain to remember.—*Maclaren.*

(δ) Joy is the highest testimony that can be given to our complacency in any thing or person. Love or joy is a fuel to the fire; if love lay little fuel of desires on the heart, then the flame of joy that comes thence will not be great. Now God's joy is great in pardoning poor sinners that come in; therefore His affection is great in the offer thereof. It is made the very motive that prevails with God to pardon sinners, "Because He delighteth in mercy," "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, for He delighteth in mercy." God doth all this, "because He delighteth in mercy."

Ask why the fisher stands all night with his angle in the river; he will tell you, because he delights in the sport. Well, you know now the reason why God stands so long waiting on sinners, months, years, preaching to them; it is that He may be gracious in pardoning them, and in that act delight Himself. Princes very often pardon traitors to please others more than themselves, or else it would never be done; but God doth it chiefly to delight and gladden His own merciful heart. Hence the business Christ came about (which was no other but to reconcile sinners to God) is called "the pleasure of the Lord" (Isa. liii. 10).—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

Many people get a wrong idea of God by thinking of Him as infinite only in justice and power; but infinite applies to the feelings of God as much as to the stretch of His right hand. There is nothing in His nature which is not measureless. Many think God sits brooding in heaven, as storms brood in summer skies, full of bolts and rain, and believe that they must come to Him under the covert of some apology, or beneath some umbrellaed excuse, lest the clouds should break, and the tempest overwhelm them. But when men repent towards God, they go not to storms, but to serene and tranquil skies, and to a Father who waits to receive them with all tenderness and delicacy and love. His eye is not dark

with vengeance, nor His heart turbulent with wrath; and to repent towards His justice and vindictiveness must always be from a lower motive than to repent towards His generosity and love. When you wish to please God, treat Him as one who feels sorry for sinners; treat Him as one who longs to help those who need help; go to Him confidingly. No matter how bad you are—the worse the better. Old Martin Luther said, "I bless God for my sins." He would never have had such a sense of the pardoning mercy of God if he had not himself been sinful. By as much as you are wicked, God is glorious in restoring you to purity. Let Him do for you those things which are the most generous and magnanimous, and that will please Him best. He is a Being whose feelings and affections move on such vast lines of latitude and longitude, that the more you presume upon His goodness, and cast yourself before Him saying, "I need a miracle of grace and mercy," the better He is pleased.

Now I beseech you to kindle up a thought of what your mother would do if you were a sinful, heart-broken, discouraged man, but repentant, saying, "I have trod the thorny way of life, and learned its mischief, can you, mother, help me to begin anew?" What mother would cast away such a son? What father would not receive a son on such terms? And if earthly parents can lift themselves up into feelings of holy sympathy for a repentant child, what must be the feelings of God when His children come to Him for help to break away from sin, and to lead lives of rectitude? Read the 15th chapter of Luke, and find out what God's feelings are; and then say, "I will arise, and go to my Father."—*Beecher.*

Self-scrutiny in God's Presence.

i. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

The outflow of holy displeasure contained in the earlier portions of this chapter would prepare us to expect an everlasting reprobacy of the rebellious and unfaithful Church, but it is strangely followed by the most yearning and melting entreaty ever addressed by the Most High to the creatures of His footstool.

I. The text represents God as saying to the trangressors of His law, "Come, and let us reason together." The first lesson to be learned, consequently, is the duty of examining our moral character and conduct along with God. When a responsible being has made a wrong use of his powers, nothing is more reasonable than that he should call himself to account for this abuse. Nothing, certainly, is more necessary. There can be no amendment for the future until the past has been cared for. But that this examination may be both thorough and profitable, it must be made in company with the Searcher of hearts. For there are always two beings who are concerned with sin: the being who commits it, and the Being against whom it is committed. Whenever, therefore, an examination is made into the nature of moral evil as it exists in the individual heart, both parties concerned should share in the examination. Such a joint examination as this produces a very keen and clear sense of the evil and guilt of sin. Conscience, indeed, makes cowards of us all, but when the eye of God is felt to be upon us, it smites us to the ground. 1. When the soul is shut up along with the Holy One of Israel, there are great searchings of heart. Man is honest and anxious at such a time. His usual thoughtlessness and torpidity upon the subject of religion leave him, and he becomes a serious and deeply-interested creature. 2. Another effect of this "reasoning together" with God respecting our character and conduct is to render our views discriminating. The action of the mind is not only intense, it is also intelligent. The sinner knows that he is wrong, and his Maker is right—that he is wicked, and that God is holy. He perceives these two fundamental facts with a simplicity and a certainty that admit of no debate. The confusion and obscurity of his mind, and particularly the queryings whether these things are so, begin to disappear like a fog when disparted and scattered by sunrise. Objects are seen in their true proportions and meanings; right and wrong, the carnal mind and the spiritual mind,

heaven and hell—all the great contraries that pertain to the subject of religion—are distinctly understood, and thus the first step is taken towards a better state of things in the soul (α).

II. The second lesson taught in the text is, that there is forgiveness with God. If mercy were not a manifested attribute of God, all self-examination, and especially all this conjoint Divine scrutiny, would be a pure torment and a pure gratuity. We have the amplest assurance in the whole written revelation of God, but nowhere else, that "there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared." The text is an exceedingly explicit assertion of this great truth. The very same Being who invites us to reason with Him and canvass the subject of our criminality, in the very same breath, if we may so speak, assures us that He will forgive all that is found in this examination. And upon such terms cannot the criminal well afford to examine into his crime? The Divine pity outruns and exceeds the crime. Paradoxical as it may appear, self-examination, when joined with a distinct recognition of the Divine character, and a conscious sense of God's scrutiny, is the surest means of producing in a guilty mind a firm conviction that God is merciful, and is the swiftest way of finding Him to be so. Abhorrent as iniquity is to the pure mind of God, it is nevertheless a fact that that sinner who goes directly into this Dread Presence with all his sins upon his head, in order to know them, to be condemned and crushed by them, and to confess them, is the one who soonest returns with peace and hope in his soul. For he discovers that God is as cordial and sincere in His offer to forgive as He is in His threat to punish; and having, to his sorrow, felt the reality and power of the Divine anger, he now, to his joy, feels the equal reality and power of the Divine love. And this is the one great lesson which every man must learn, or perish for ever.

From these two lessons of our text we deduce the following practical directions—1. *In all states of religious anxiety we should betake ourselves instantly and directly to God;* there is no other refuge for the human soul but God in Christ. Are we sinners, and in fear for the final result of our life? Though it may seem like running into fire, we must, nevertheless, betake ourselves first and immediately to that Being who hates and punishes sin (1 Chron. xx. 13). 2. *In all our religious anxiety we should make a full and plain statement of everything to God.* Even when the story is one of shame and remorse, we find it to be mental relief, patiently, and without any reservation or palliation, to expose the whole, not only to our own eye, but to that of our Judge. For to this very thing have we been invited. This is precisely the "reasoning together" which God proposes to us. God has not offered clemency to a sinful world with the expectation or desire that there be, on the part of those to whom it is offered, such a stinted and meagre confession, such a glozing over and diminution of sin, as to make that clemency appear a very small matter. He well knows the depth and the immensity of the sin which He proposes to pardon, and has made provision accordingly. In the phrase of Luther, it is no painted sinner who is to be forgiven, and it is no painted Saviour who is offered. The transgression is deep and real, and the atonement is deep and real. The crime cannot be exaggerated, neither can the expiation. He, therefore, who makes the plainest and most childlike statement of himself to God, acts most in accordance with the mind and will and gospel of God. If man can only be hearty, full, and unreserved in confession, he will find God to be hearty, full, and unreserved in absolution.—*W. G. T. Shedd, D.D., The American Pulpit of the Day*, vol. i. pp. 829–842.

(α) Man is not straitened upon the side of the Divine mercy. The obstacle in the way of his salvation is in himself; and the particular, fatal obstacle consists in the fact that he does not feel that he needs mercy. God in Christ stands ready to pardon, but man, the sinner, stands up before Him, like the besotted criminal in our courts of law, with no feeling upon the subject. The Judge assures him that

He has a boundless grace and clemency to bestow; but the stolid, hardened man is not even aware that he has committed a dreadful crime, and needs grace and clemency. There is food in infinite abundance, but no hunger upon the part of the man. The water of life is flowing by in torrents, but men have no thirst. In this state of things nothing can be done but to pass a sentence of condemnation. God cannot forgive a being who does not even know that he needs to be forgiven. Knowledge, then, self-knowledge, is the great requisite; and the want of it is the cause of perdition. This "reasoning together" with God, respecting our past and present character and conduct, is the first step to be taken by any one who would make preparation for eternity. As soon as we come to a right understanding of our lost and guilty condition, we shall cry, "Be merciful to me, a sinner; create within me a clean heart, O God." Without such an understanding—such an intelligent perception of our sin and guilt—we never shall, and we never can.—*Shedd.*

Sinners Self-destroyed.

ℓ. 19. *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Delitsch translates—"*If ye then shall willingly hear, ye shall eat the good of the land; if ye shall obstinately rebel, ye shall be eaten by the sword: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.*"

Strachey translates—"*If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall feed on the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, the sword shall feed on you,*" which brings out one of the contrasts of the verse still more clearly. "The promise of eating, *i.e.*, of the full enjoyment of domestic blessings, and therefore of settled, peaceful rest at home, is placed in contrast with the curse of being eaten with the sword."—*Delitsch.*

Note the close connection between these verses and verse 18. God condescends to invite rebels to a conference with Himself, He is willing to grant them the fullest forgiveness; but it is on the condition of future obedience. On this condition He is prepared to do more than forgive them,—He will enrich them with all needful blessings, of which peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of the earth is here named as a symbol; but if they will not listen to His invitation, accept His gracious offer, and yield the obedience He righteously demands, then the vengeance they have deserved will come upon them. They have the matter entirely in their own hands; it rests with them to determine whether their future shall be one of happiness or misery. Thus we are led to the great doctrine of these verses, that *sinners are self-destroyed.*

This is a doctrine frequently insisted on in Scripture (Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 2 Sam. xiv. 14; Hos. xiii. 9; 2 Pet. iii. 9). It is true in a twofold sense. 1. **They sin voluntarily.** God never foreordained any man to work iniquity (α). Some are indeed surrounded from their birth by evil influences, and on this account, as well as on account of that corrupt nature which we all inherit, they do sinful acts from their infancy, but they do not *sin* until the dawn of moral consciousness; and after that, every act of iniquity they perpetrate they perpetrate voluntarily. 2. **They suffer voluntarily.** They do not merely expose themselves to the penalty of sin, they take it upon them voluntarily. God offers to remit it, on condition of their repentance, but they reject the proffered boon; like a suicide who repels the surgeon who would close his bleeding wounds.

In this fact that sinners thus destroy themselves we have—**I. A terrible illustration of the depth of human depravity.** Sinners not only hate God so much as to break His laws, but so much as to harden themselves against His love, and to reject His mercy. **II. A sufficient vindication of the severities of the Divine justice.** 1. No sinner in hell will be able to reproach God for his misery. 2. We who contemplate the awful fact that human

souls are suffering in hell have no right to reproach God for their sufferings. These sufferers deliberately turned their backs upon God and heaven, and went of their own accord to perdition.

Application.—1. Before you to-day blessing and cursing, life and death are set: choose ye which ye will. 2. "If ye be *willing*," God will open to you all the treasures of His grace. But not otherwise! He will compel no man to accept His mercy. 3. Whatever be your choice, God will ratify it. If you choose destruction, you shall have it, and then you will not be able to revoke your choice (Prov. i. 22–31) (*a*).

(*a*) The argument which the fatalist bases upon organisation is self-annihilating when applied to the common relations of life. The fatalist himself does not believe in his own doctrine; in speculative reasoning he is eager to charge moral crime upon organic defect; yet, in practical magistracy, he arraigns and condemns the criminal to punishment. But how monstrous an outrage is this upon his own creed! The criminal was compelled through stress of organisation to commit the crime, yet the fatalist punishes him for doing what he could not help! Let the principle of the fatalist be admitted, and there is an end to all legislation—an end, indeed, to the social compact itself. All associated life is regulated by a system of restraints; but restraint implies self-control, and self-control is directly opposed to fatalism. Let a criminal plead that he could not help committing a certain crime; and if the judge allow the plea, he will at once treat the criminal as a lunatic, and instruct the officers of justice accordingly. Magistracy proceeds upon the principle that men can "help" committing crime. All human legislation assumes a man's power of self-regulation, and grounds itself on the grand doctrine of man's responsibility to man. At this point, upon the same principle in relation to God, Theology says, You hold yourselves responsible to one another on all social matters, you punish the criminal, you ignore the plea of fatalism on all questions of property, order, and security; now go further, heighten your own social base, carry out to their logical issues your own principles and methods, and you will reach all that God requires of man. If it be urged that God gave the criminal his organisation, the objection does not touch the argument. The argument is, that in human consciousness the plea of fatalism is ignored on all practical matters; away beyond all written statutes there is a conviction that man can regulate his actions, and ought to be held responsible for such regulation. Man himself thus, by his own conduct and his own law, acquits God of all charge upon this matter; the very recognition by the magistrate of man's responsibility is itself a direct acquittal of God from the accusations of fatalism. God need not be interrogated upon the subject, for the magistrate himself, faithful to the consciousness of universal humanity, treats the fatalistic theory as an absurdity.—*Joseph Parker.*

The Certainty of the Destruction of the Impenitent.

i. 19. *If ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Let a man look steadily at the sun for a few moments, and for a long time afterwards he will see nothing else; whithersoever he turns, he will behold the sun. Some men have looked at God's wondrous mercy so exclusively, that they can see in Him and His Word nothing but mercy, and they doubt, and teach others to doubt, whether God will fulfil His threatenings against sin. Let such persons consider these three facts.—I. **That God's justice requires that He should execute His threatenings against iniquity.** He Himself would commit a frightful injustice, and would be the most active promoter and abettor of evil in the universe, if He were to treat all men alike. His mere delay to take vengeance upon transgressors gives rise to some of the most perplexing of moral problems (Eccles. ix. 2, 3; Ps. lxxiii. 1–9, &c.), and if He were never to do so, the whole universe would be driven into atheism. This is the tendency even of His merciful delays (Ps. x. 11; lxxiii. 11, &c.) II. **That God's truth requires that He should execute His threatenings against iniquity.** "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," and shall He not fulfil His Word? So settled is the conviction of the human mind that He must do so, that it has been found one of the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. How God can be

truthful, and yet pardon the sinner, it has transcended the human mind to conceive. The atonement of Christ is the *practical* solution of this mystery. III. That the history of His ancient people shows that while in God there is a goodness most marvellous and tender, on account of which we should praise Him evermore, there is also a severity so terrible, that on account of it all the world should stand in awe of Him. Remember what frightful calamities (the sword, famine, pestilence, exile) God sent upon His ancient people in this world; and shall we imagine that He who displayed such a capacity for sternness in this world will be found incapable of it in the world which is to come? Let us dismiss this delusion which is at once utterly groundless and unspeakably dangerous (α).

Application.—1. True reverence for God will lead us to accept with equal implicitness all the disclosures which He has been pleased to give of His character. He will be to us neither a God all mercy nor a God all justice. In Him both these high qualities are found in equal perfection: they are not opponents, but allies. Each is always in absolute harmony with the other. 2. True reverence for God will lead us to tremble in view of His threatenings, as well as to rejoice in view of His promises. 3. It is with the God of the Bible, and not with the God of our own sentimental fancies, that we shall have to deal with at the last. 4. If we take nature as our guide to the interpretation of revelation, we shall find it easier to believe in God's severity than in His benignity. In nature there are appalling indications of sternness. The world in which we now are is full of suffering (β). 5. It is in mercy that the threatenings of God's justice are now sent forth (γ).

(α) If Scripture be certainly true, then the most terrible passages in it are certainly true; nothing is more hardly believed by men than that which will be most tormenting to their minds, when it is believed that none shall be saved but the regenerate and holy; and those that live not after the flesh, but the Spirit, and love God in Christ above all the world, even their own lives; and that, besides these few, all the rest shall be tormented in hell for ever. This is the doctrine that flesh and blood will hardly down with. They say or think they will never believe that God will be so unmerciful; as if God must needs be less merciful than man, because He is more just and holy, and will not be so indulgent to their flesh and sin as they are themselves, and would have Him to be. And I have known even godly men, through the remnant of their corruption and darkness in the things of God, and the violence of temptation, much troubled with their unbelief in this particular. But God cannot lie the Scripture being true, and the Christian religion certainly true, every part of it must needs be true. But because sensual nature looks for sensible demonstration or proof, let me ask the unbelievers this one question—"Do you believe that which you see and feel, and all the world feels as well as you?" You know that all mankind liveth here a life of trouble and misery; we come into the world in a very poor condition, and we pass through it in daily labour and sorrow, and we pass out of it through the dreadful pangs of death. What incessant labour have the most of them, how much want and misery, how much care and grief! Do you not see and feel how sicknesses do torment us? When one pain is over, another is at hand. Have you not seen some, under such terrible fits of the gout, or stone, or other diseases, that they thought no torment could be greater; some with their legs rotting, and must be cut off; some with loathsome cancers and leprosies on them many years together; some that have lost their eyesight, have lost almost all the comfort of life; some that never could see; some that never could hear or speak? I have known some in such pain that they have cried out they did not believe there was greater in hell; some are mad, and some idiots: are not all these in a very miserable case? Now I would ask you further if God may, without any unmercifulness, do all this to men, and that as a chastisement in the way to bring them to repentance; if He may, without unmercifulness, make a David cry out in misery, and wash his couch with his tears; and make a Job to lie scraping his sores on a dunghill; why should you think he cannot, without unmercifulness, torment incurable sinners in hell? Further, I would ask you this question; suppose you had lived in Adam's paradise, or some condition of pleasure and rest, where you never had tasted of sickness, or labour, or want, or feared death, if God's Word had there told you, but that man shall endure so much misery as I have here mentioned and men daily suffer, and should die at last for his sin, would you have said, "I will never believe God would be so unmerciful?" You that say so now, would likely have said so then in this case; for feeling the pleasure yourselves, you would on the same ground have said, "God is unmerciful if He should make man so miserable;" and yet you

see and feel that God doth it, and we know that He is not unmerciful.—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(β) Suffering comes to us through and from our whole nature. It cannot be winked out of sight. It cannot be thrust into a subordinate place in the picture of human life. It is the chief burden of history. It is the solemn theme of one of the highest departments of literature, the tragic drama. It gives to fictions their deep interest: it wails through much of our poetry. A large part of human vocations are intended to shut up some of its avenues. It has left traces on every human countenance over which years have passed. It is not to a few the most vivid recollection of life.—*W. Ellery Channing.*

(γ) God indeed tells us of hell, but it is to persuade us to flee to heaven; and as a skilful painter fills the background of his picture with his darker colours, God introduces the smoke of torment, and the black thunder-clouds of Sinai, to give brighter prominence to Jesus, the Cross of Calvary, and His love to the chief of sinners.

His voice of terror is like the scream of the mother-bird when the hawk is in the sky. She alarms her brood, that they may run and hide beneath her feathers; and as I believe that God had left that mother dumb unless He had given her wings to cover them, I am sure that He, who is very "pitiful," and has no pleasure in any creature's pain, had never turned our eyes to the horrible gulf unless for the voice that cries, "Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom."

We had never heard of sin had there been no Saviour. We had never heard of hell had there been no heaven. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." And never had Bible light flashed before the eyes of the sleeping felon, to wake him from his happy dream, but that he might see the smiling form of Mercy, and hear her as she says, with finger pointing the way, "Behold I have set before thee an open door."—*Guthrie.*

Moral Declension.

i. 21–23. *How is the faithful city become an harlot!* (α) *It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers* (β). *Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.*

I. Moral declensions may take place in the best of men. "The faithful city—silver—wine—princes," the very best things depraved. **II. There are no limits to the moral declensions that may take place in the best of men.** "The faithful city is become an *harlot*," &c. We have here an argument—1. For universal *humility* (1 Cor. x. 12; Gal. vi. 1). 2. For universal *watchfulness* (Mark xiv. 38). 3. For universal *prayer* (Ps. xix. 12, 13; cxxxix. 23, 24).

(α) "The faithful city is become an harlot:" —Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion, the wife of the Holy One of Israel, has broken the bond of her covenant with Him, has set at nought the Divine constitution and order in which He originally placed, and has continued to sustain her: and, as the outward consequence and sign of this spiritual defection, has actually fallen to the worship of other gods. Throughout this prophecy Isaiah dwells chiefly on the sins of the princes and rulers of the nation, and only incidentally on those of the people; and accordingly he now dilates on the characteristic vices of the former, which are the fruits of their national unfaithfulness. Social and political morality have vanished along with religious faith; thieves and murderers are found instead of virtuous citizens; the nobles and men in authority are the first to break the laws they should enforce; the administration of justice is so corrupt that the judges take bribes, connive at the robbers whose booty they share, and permit the rich man to pervert the law for the oppression of the fatherless and widow, who have no patrons to demand, and no money to buy, justice: and thus the aristocracy, setting aside all belief that they hold their wealth and power in trust from God for the benefit of the people under them, do but employ these as irresistible engines for breaking down all rights that can oppose them in their pursuit of luxury and vice.—*Strachey.*

(β) Jerusalem was once full of such right; and Righteousness was not merely there in the form of a hastily-passing guest, but had come down from above to take up her permanent abode in Jerusalem: she tarried there day and night, as if it were her home. The prophet had in his mind the times of David and Solomon, and also more especially the time of Jehoshaphat (about one hundred and fifty years before Isaiah's appearance), who restored the administration of justice, which had fallen into neglect since the closing years of Solomon's reign and the time of Rehoboam and Abijah, to which Asa's reformation had not extended, and reorganised it entirely in the spirit of the

law. It is possible also that Jehoiada, the high priest in the time of Joash, may have revived the institutions of Jehoshaphat so far as they had fallen into disuse under his three godless successors; but even in the second half of the reign of Joash the administration of justice fell into the same disgraceful state, at least as compared with the times of David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, as that in which Isaiah found it. The glaring contrast between the present and the past is indicated by the expression "*and now.*"—*Delitzsch.*

An Illustrious Inhabitant.

i. 21. *Righteousness lodged in it.*

I. A High Commendation. Righteousness lodged in the city—not merely visited it as a passing guest, but dwelt in it as a permanent abode [Alexander and Kay—"had its *home* there"]. No greater praise could be spoken of any city, nor can be uttered of any man. 1. *Let us do what we can to make our city worthy of this high commendation.* Much can be done in this direction by the combined, resolute, and persevering efforts of good men. 2. *Let us try to deserve it individually.* This may involve many sacrifices, but they will be more than compensated. Righteousness is a royal guest, ennobling and enriching those with whom she dwells, and peace, prosperity, and joy invariably follow in her train. **II. A mournful condemnation.** Righteousness *lodged* in the city; lodged, not lodges! That noble and Divine inhabitant is departed. The palace in which she dwelt is in ruins. 1. Of how many *cities* may this mournful declaration be made! The cities in which Christianity achieved some of its first and noblest triumphs are now Mohammedan and semi-heathen. They did not hold fast the truth, and now they are given over to error. We boast that this is a Christian land, but its relapse into practical heathenism is not impossible. In every action there is a constant gravitation towards evil, which can only be resisted and overcome by constant effort and earnest prayer. Let the churches of this land lay this solemn fact to heart. 2. Of how many *men* may this declaration be made! How many even of the openly vicious and criminal were once respectable members of society—yea, even honoured members of churches! They were men "subject to like passions as we are;" and in what they are we have solemn warnings as to what we may become. Let those who are most exalted, not in privileges only, but in moral excellence, also watch and pray, lest sin enter even their hearts, and expel that Divine guest whose presence secures so many blessings and warrants so many hopes.

The Possible Degeneracy of Valuable Things.

i. 22. *Thy silver is become dross.*

There are many valuable and good things in the world that through varied causes are rendered comparatively useless. They once were silver, but now they are dross. **I. The silver of thy character has become dross because of little failings.** There have been men known to all of us, of good moral characters, of lofty and heroic soul, but they were betrayed into occasional faults (α), which many condoned, which others magnified, but which they themselves did not correct, until at last their silver became dross. The character depreciated in moral worth. It was no longer current as a thing of beauty. It had lost its value. **II. The silver of thy service has become dross because of unholy motives.** Christian service is a good and precious thing, but how frequently is it rendered useless and vain by pride, by thoughts of self, and by secular motive (β). It is, indeed, as silver

when rendered by a pure and loving heart, but alas! it too often becomes dross because of the unhallowed sentiment of the soul. The mite of the widow cast into the treasury was as silver, but the munificent gifts of the Pharisees were as dross. How much of the service rendered to the great God in the pulpit, pew, and school, is but dross! This is a solemn thought. III. The silver of thy money has become dross because of selfishness. We cannot estimate the wealth of a man by the money he has in possession, but often far better by the money he gives away. When men keep their riches to themselves, solely for their own use, they cease to be rich—they are laden with coin that is not current; their silver has become dross. Liberality makes money worth its value (γ). Generosity preserves wealth from all degenerating influences. How many so-called rich men have more dross than silver in this world. IV. The silver of thy talents has become dross because of indolence. Silver is bright when kept in use. Talents are valuable when active. The mind has talents of thought and wisdom. The heart has talents of sympathy and love. The hand has talents of help. The mouth has talents of blessing. Take care that thy silver does not become as dross. —*J. S. Exell.*

(α) You need not break the glasses of a telescope, or coat them over with paint, in order to prevent you from seeing through them. Just breathe upon them, and the dew of your breath will shut out all the stars. So it does not require great crimes to hide the light of God's countenance. Little faults can do it just as well. Take a shield, and cast a spear upon it, and it will leave in it one great dent. Prick it all over with a million little needle shafts, and they will take the polish from it far more than the piercing of the spear. So it is not so much the great sins which take the freshness from our consciences, as the numberless petty faults which we are all the while committing. —*Beecher.*

(β) Our end or motive in acting determines more than anything the quality of our actions. Not that a good end will sanctify a bad action, but a bad end will vitiate every action connected with it. If, for instance, in our religious services we seek the applause of men, we must expect no reward from God; the gratification of our pride and vanity is all the reward that such polluted services can obtain. In the account which is given of Jehu, we find that the very same action which was rewarded on account of its outward conformity with God's command, was punished on account of the base principle by which he was influenced in performing it. He did well in extirpating the seed of Ahab, and was rewarded for it to the fourth generation: the blood which was shed was imputed to him as murder. Nor is there anything more common than for even religious persons to mistake the path of duty through an inattention to their own spirit. The disciples doubtless thought themselves under the influence of a commendable zeal when they would have called fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village; as did Peter, also, when he cut off the ear of Malchus. We should therefore be peculiarly cautious with respect to this, lest by the mixture of any selfish motive or base affection we offend Him whom it is our desire and endeavour to please.—*Simeon.*

(γ) If we so love our riches that we would eternally possess them, let us not hoard them up in the earth, where we are sure to leave them, carrying nothing with us but the canker of our coin, which shall bear witness against us at the Day of Judgment; but let us send them before us into heaven, delivering them unto the poor, who are God's factors and receivers; and so having conveyed and made over our goods, as it were by bills of exchange, we shall find the Lord a sure and all-sufficient paymaster, who will give us more than double usance, and yet pay us at the first sight. If we would have our coin continue sweet and good for a great space, let us know that there are for this purpose no garners comparable to poor men's stomachs, which will preserve our grain for our use unto life eternal. If we would have our clothes preserved from moths, and to last long, the backs of the naked are our safest wardrobes.—*Downame*, 1644.

A Terrible Resolve.

i. 24. *Therefore thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.*

Concerning many men, we may offer Christ's prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They sin in ignorance, or rather without thought of their character and relation to God, and of the doom which

they are bringing upon themselves. There may be such persons before me now. Acting, then, the part of a true and faithful friend, I warn you—**I. That God counts you as His enemies.** By cherishing your sins you defy His authority, and place yourself in a position of hostility to Him (α). **II. That God feels Himself injured, oppressed, and as it were hemmed in by your iniquities.** Note this most suggestive phrase, "I will *ease me* of mine adversaries," and see outline on verse 14. God's laws are His territories, and by your transgressions you invade them. Your sins are *trespasses*. God feels towards you as the French feel towards the Germans who have taken possession of and settled down in Alsace and Lorraine; you put upon God an indignity which He cannot and will not bear. **III.** That while God endures your trespasses for a time, in the merciful hope that by His forbearance you may be lead to repentance, **He will not restrain His anger for ever,** but will presently give free vent to it (β), and sweep you into that place where, though you may retain the disposition to sin against Him, you will not have the power.

Application.—Now consider—1. That this is not the resolve of some feeble being destitute of resources for the accomplishment of his purposes. He who thus solemnly warns you is "the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel." 2. Whether you have resources that will enable you to cope with this adversary whose indignation you have aroused (Luke xiv. 31). If not, consider—3. What is the course that wisdom would suggest to you in your present circumstances (Luke xiv. 32) (γ).

(α) If a king warns a city of traitors, and calls upon them to search them out and send them away, and they never regard the message, but willingly give them harbour and entertainment, it is a sign they are disaffected to him: to cherish a sin after warning is open defiance of God.—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(β) At this first step we might reason on the testimony if we pleased, instead of accepting it, and raise the objection that to imagine passion in God, especially so turbid a passion as anger, conflicts with our notions of His character, and degrades Him in our apprehensions. Beware: remember that in forming an estimate of the character and proceedings of God, we are but little children forming an estimate of the character and proceedings of a man of matured experience. Were it not more reasonable, as well as more reverent, to accept what He says, and to leave Him afterwards to clear up any mystery which may envelope His nature? I can indeed conceive in Him nothing turbid, impetuous, or impulsive, such as sullies the clearness of the human will. But this I can conceive, that there is in Him some high perfection (more incomprehensible to my finite capacity than the speculations of an astronomer to a peasant child), of which anger is the most adequate exponent to my mind, and which I must be content to think of and speak of as anger, or else to remain in total ignorance of it. And this also I can—not only conceive, but most readily assent to, that in an absolutely perfect nature there should be an utter abhorrence of, and antipathy to, moral evil, most justly represented to simple minds by the terms "anger," "curse." We have never seen a perfect character; no perfect character, save one, ever moved upon the earth: but the righteous man, who is striving after and approximating to perfection, has often crossed our path; and surely we have marked in him, that the more righteous he is, the more doth he abhor (in the language of Holy Scripture) everything that is evil. What is the effect upon one who breathes habitually the atmosphere of communion with God, of catching in the current tidings of the day the intelligence of some awful outburst of depravity? When such an one passes on an errand of mercy through the crowded alleys of a great city, and the shouts of malignant execration and profaneness ring in his ear, or scenes of impurity are paraded before his eye, with what feeling does he encounter these symptoms of human degradation? Are they not like a foul odour to his nostrils, or a jarring note to his ear, or an abortion to his sight? Does he not turn away with loathing, and recoil from such scenes and such sounds with an antipathy strong in proportion to his goodness? And is it, then, so hard to conceive that in perfect goodness there may be a recoil from moral evil, something similar in kind to this, though infinitely stronger in degree? And is not such a recoil righteous, and a token of righteousness?—*Goulburn*.

(γ) Let us take heed, for mercy is like a rainbow, which God set in the clouds to remember mankind: it shines here as long as it is not hindered; but we must never look for it after it is night, and it shines not in the other world. If we refuse mercy here, we shall have justice there.—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

The Purpose of Punishment.

1. 24–27. *Therefore thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: and I will turn mine hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterwards thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.*

The denunciation of the iniquity of Jerusalem (vers. 21–23) is followed by a solemn announcement of God's determination to punish it. **I. God will certainly punish sin.** "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies." See preceding outline, and that on verse 20. **II. In punishing sin God is not moved by any vindictive purpose.** True, He speaks here of taking vengeance upon His enemies, but these words coming from the lips of Jehovah must not be interpreted as we should have to interpret them if they came from the lips of a Ghengis Khan or a Tippoo Saib. We must remember that this is the utterance of the Mighty One of Israel, who is infinitely uplifted above every unholy passion. Whatever misconstruction this phrase, taken alone, might be open to, is entirely obviated by the declarations which follow it, which teach us— **III. That God's aim even in the severest chastisements is the reformation of the offenders, and their restoration to true blessedness.** For what purpose will He turn His hand upon Jerusalem? Not that He may destroy her, but that He may purify her, as silver is purified in the furnace; and through this painful process she is caused to pass, that she may be restored to her former dignity and blessedness. It is for these purposes that God chastises nations and individuals to-day.

Application.—1. Those who are living sinful lives may certainly expect severe judgments. Sin and sorrow are inseparably linked, and God is solemnly pledged not to "clear" the guilty. 2. Those on whom judgments on account of sin have fallen should neither despise them nor be driven by them to despair (Heb. xii. 5). These are two great evils. Indifference to chastisement brings on still severer strokes (α). God will break the stubborn sinners who refuse to bend (ver. 28) (β). Despair defeats the very object for which our chastisements are sent, and is itself a grievous offence against God. Instead of yielding to despair, we should be filled with hope, for God has loving purposes towards us, and our prayer should be, not that the afflictions should be removed, but that God's purposes in them should be fulfilled. It is worth while to go into the furnace, if thereby we may be cleansed from the dross by which we are defiled.

(α) The physician, when he findeth that the potion which he hath given his patient will not work, he seconds it with one more violent; but if he perceive the disease to be settled, then he puts him into a course of physic, so that *medicâ miserè* (he shall have at present but small comfort of his life). And thus doth the surgeon too: if a gentle plaster will not serve, then he applies that which is more corroding, and, to prevent a gangrene, he makes use of his cauterising knife, and takes off the joint or member that is so ill affected. Even so God, when men profit not by such crosses as He hath formerly exercised them with, when they are not bettered by lighter afflictions, then He sends heavier, and proceeds from milder to sharper courses. If the dross of their sin will not come off, He will throw them into the melting-pot again and again, crush them harder in the press, and lay on such irons as shall enter more deeply into their souls. If He strikes and they grieve not, if they be so foolish that they will not know the judgment of their God, He will bring seven times more plagues upon them—cross upon cross, loss upon loss, trouble upon trouble, one sorrow on the neck of another—till they are, in a manner, wasted and consumed.—*Firmicus.*

This we may rest satisfied of, that whensoever God's hand is upon us, we must either yield a voluntary, or be forced to a violent, submission. If our stubbornness is such that we will not bend, it is certain that our weakness is also such that we must needs break.

If God's message will not win upon Pharaoh, His plagues shall compel him; and therefore, when He sent Moses to him, He put a rod into his hand, as well as a word into his mouth. When God fully purposes to afflict a man, he is like a bird in a net, the more he strives and flutters, the more he is entangled; for the Supreme Judge of all things is resolved to go through with His great work of judgment, and to make all obstinate, sturdy sinners know, that He has power to constrain where His goodness will not persuade.—*South*, 1632–1716.

The Divine Idea of Redemption.

i. 25, 26. *And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city.*

We have here the promise of a redemption which God would accomplish for Jerusalem, and from the terms of the promise, especially taken in connection with the preceding statements (vers. 21–23), we may learn what God's idea of redemption is: it is to purge away all that debases and to restore all that is lost. In other words, *redemption consists in restoration to the Divine ideal.* Such was the redemption which God promised to accomplish for Jerusalem: such is the redemption which He offers to accomplish for us. Here we have—

I. **A correction of a common error.** Most men, when they hear of redemption, think of it merely as salvation from suffering, rescue from the peril of hell. This is a *consequence* of redemption, but redemption consists in the cleansing of our nature from all defilement, and in our restoration to the Divine ideal of humanity (Col. iii. 10; Eph. iv. 24, 13). God is going to do something grander for us than save us from hell. He is going to make us "meet" for heaven (1 John iii. 2). It would be truer to say that God's idea of redemption is "salvation *by* suffering," than to say that it is "salvation *from* suffering." The figure used in the text is expressive of the keenest suffering—"I will purely purge away thy dross." But dross is purged away by *fire!* Suffering is one of the instruments which God most frequently uses to save men from sin.

II. **A model for preachers.** Guided by a Divine inspiration, the prophet does not speak of happiness, but of purity and righteousness; he names these as the great favours which God was about to bestow upon His people. So should preachers to-day strive to make men understand that *these* are the greatest blessings which God can confer upon man. All other blessings spring from them; as all social blessings are secured to a community when its "judges" are righteous and its "counsellors" fear God. Let preachers do their utmost to make it plain to the men of this generation, that just as if we have the sun we shall have light and heat, so if they have purity, they shall have peace; if they attain to holiness, they shall attain to a nobler and completer happiness than those who long for happiness merely ever dream of.

III. **An ennobling ideal to be striven after by all men.** Happy is the man who has a great purpose in life. And what is the purpose with which a study of our text should inspire us? Not merely to "flee from the wrath to come," but to become "partakers of the Divine nature," and so to attain to God's ideal of humanity. God is striving to restore us to His own likeness: let us do all that in us lies to help on this restoration (Phil. ii. 12, 13). The "salvation" we are to "work out" is not salvation from guilt (*that* is Christ's work, accomplished by Him once for all on the cross), but from the indwelling corruption which is to us what dross is to the precious metals. Nor are we merely to seek to put away that which is evil (α); we are to strive to set up in us all noblenesses which are to

character what "judges" and "counsellors" are to a city (2 Pet. i. 5–7; Phil. iv. 8). Blessed is the man who has this ideal in life. **I. He is saved from fear,** the haunting dread of failure which oppresses those whose supreme desire is merely to be saved from hell. **II. He has a sustaining hope,** based upon the sure promises of God's Word (1 Pet. i. 10, 11). **III. He has a present and growing joy,** such as can come only from self-conquest and moral progress. The joy of "the just," that is, of the men whose steadfast aim is righteousness, is like "the path of the just" (Prov. iv. 18).

(α) Christianity ends not in negatives. No man clears his garden of weeds but in order to the planting of flowers or useful herbs in their room. God calls upon us to dispossess our corruptions, but it is for the reception of new inhabitants. A room may be clean, and yet empty; but it is not enough that our hearts be swept, unless they be also garnished, or that we lay aside our pride, our luxury, our covetousness, unless humility, temperance, and liberality rise up and thrive in their places. The design of religion would be very poor and short should it look no further than only to keep men from being swine, goats, and tigers, without improving the principles of humanity into positive and higher perfections. The soul may be cleansed from all blots, and yet still be left but a blank. But Christianity is of a thriving and aspiring nature, and requires us to proceed from grace to grace (2 Pet. i. 5–7), ascending by degrees, till at length the top of the ladder reaches heaven, and conveys the soul so qualified into the mansions of glory. —*South*, 1633–1716.

Social Regeneration.

i. 26. *And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city.*

We have in the contest a picture of a dismantled city, a disorganised community; and here God tells us that He will undertake the work of its reconstruction. **I. All the arrangements of society are absolutely in God's hands.** "*I* will restore," &c. No man can overturn, or build up, but by His permission. On Him all projects of national, social, or ecclesiastical reconstruction depend for their success. That on which He smiles flourishes; that on which He frowns withers away. Let reformers and reconstructors of society remember and recognise this great fact, that God rules on earth as in heaven. **II. All interruptions of social order are under the control of God.** Revolutions occur not by chance, not by the will of man, but by the will of God. They occur only when, and continue only as long as He pleases. By Him judges and counsellors are swept away, and by Him they are restored. No nation is so broken that it cannot be uplifted by Him to power and glory, "as at the first." **III. No social state can be purified but by religious processes.** There are many philanthropic and political projects which have for their aim national regeneration, but they are all foredoomed to come to nought, because they lack the religious element. Moral reformation must go before social advancement: a return to righteousness is the first step to national exaltation (α). **IV. The great name will follow the true regeneration.** "*Afterward* thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city." Not first the exalted title, but the illustrative character; not first the splendid renown, but the glorious achievement!—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(α) Think not that any change in the form of government would cure that which is caused by the people's sin, or the common depravity of human nature. Some think they can contrive such forms of government as that the rulers shall be able to do no hurt; but either they will disable them to do good, or else their engine is but glass, and will fail or break when it comes to execution. Men that are themselves so bad and unhumbled as not to know how bad they are, and how bad mankind is, are still laying the blame upon the form of government when anything is amiss, and think by a change to find a cure. As if when an army is infected with the plague, or composed of cowards, the change of the general or form of government would prove a cure. But if a monarch be faulty, in an aristocracy you will have but many faulty governors for one, and in a democracy a multitude of tyrants.—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

The Twofold Effect of Divine Judgments.

i. 27, 28. *Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness: and the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.*

These verses are closely and vitally connected: it is a mistake to separate them, as in the Authorised Version. Their meaning would be conveyed to the English reader, if they were translated—"*Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness; and thereby also the transgressors and sinners shall be destroyed, yea they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed*" (*α*). By judgment is meant the doom which in the preceding verses had been threatened against guilty Jerusalem (*e.g.*, ver. 18): this "judgment" would be a manifestation of God's punitive righteousness, and the declaration is that the infliction of this "judgment" would have a twofold effect—it would redeem Zion and her converts, and it would destroy the transgressors and sinners.

The diverse effects of Divine judgments is a matter well worthy of our study. **I. One effect of those judgments by which God manifests His righteous indignation against sin is to redeem His people from their transgressions.** A prolonged period of peace and prosperity such as the Jews enjoyed under Uzziah is always perilous to the vital religion of a nation. Formalism is apt to prevail. The lines of demarcation between the Church and the world are apt to be effaced; "Zion" is apt to become merged in "Jerusalem." In love to His people, God is therefore compelled to send upon their nation great calamities. These lead to searchings of heart, and reformations of conduct and character. Men learn again to wait upon God, and reverently to regard His will (ch. xxvi. 9). The Church shines once more with the glory of spiritual conformity to God, and the result is that she is increased by converts from the world: to these also the season of judgment is also the season of redemption. But, **II. Another effect of God's judgments is to harden the obdurate.** His chastisements lead some men to further acts of rebellion against Him (ver. 5). Like Pharaoh, they harden themselves more and more as God sends plague after plague upon them (Exod. viii. 19, 32, &c.) Hence seasons of public calamity (such as that of the plague in London, &c.) have always been seasons of public crime. Transgressors madly dare Omnipotence to a trial of strength, and the result is their utter destruction.

Our subject as thus unfolded gives rise to the following practical reflections—1. In a season of national or individual prosperity we should be especially watchful and prayerful against conformity to the world (*β*). 2. We should not regard judgments that come upon our nation or ourselves merely as calamities: they may be God's angels sent in truest mercy, and they bring with them to the people of God great moral and spiritual compensations. 3. Judgments, when they come upon us, afford us an admirable test of our real character: if we be indeed the people of God, they will lead us to submission and to more earnest strivings after holiness; but if they awaken within us a spirit of murmuring, of repining, of resentment against God, we have good cause to suspect that our religion has never been the work of God in our hearts (*γ*). 4. In the season of judgment we really have only one alternative before us—to turn or burn. No stoutness of heart will enable us to resist God's consuming wrath against iniquity (Mal. iv. 1).

(*α*) The word "together" does not mean that the transgressor shall be destroyed *together with* the sinner; but that the destruction of this one class, called both transgressors and sinners, shall come in close connection, "together with," the salvation of the penitent who are brought back to God by correction, as is said in the previous verses. The same sort of infliction that reclaimed the "converts" (ver. 27), hardened and sealed over to ruin

those who would still "forsake the Lord."—*Cowles.*

(β) How often does worldly prosperity tend to this lapsing of the soul from God! How often do our very outward mercies and blessings superinduce this spiritual languor and decay! It is with believers individually as with the Church collectively—they are never in a condition less favourable to spiritual health and advancement than when they have no trial or cross to brace their energies and invigorate their graces. The soldier gets supine after battle. History tells us how the bravest veterans of the great Carthaginian general got demoralised and degenerate when, victory over, they sat down to rejoicing and revelry, before the gates of Capua; they never were the same heroes again.—*Macduff.*

(γ) As it is easy to know a piece of gold from a piece of brass when they come both to the anvil and be stricken with the hammer, for brass will not be handled, but when it cometh to the beating breaketh and maketh a sharp din and irksome, but gold soundeth sweetly, and is pliable; so when the hypocrite cometh between the anvil and the hammer of affliction, he breaketh with impatience, and lamenteth in blasphemies against God; whereas a faithful Christian praiseth God, and layeth out his heart, submitting himself willingly under the Lord's hand that striketh him.—*Cawdray*, 1598-1684.

Forsaking the Lord.

i. 28. *They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.*

I. The guilt of forsaking the service of the Lord. 1. Man is bound by the law of his nature to obey that Almighty Being by whom he was made an intelligent and immortal creature. Every discovery which reason opens to him of the transcendant perfections of the Lord of the universe urges the duty of offering to this great and glorious Being the homage of his heart and life. Every day's preservation increases his obligation to serve his gracious Preserver. 2. Many in forsaking the Lord violate their own express and solemn engagements (Heb. x. 29). **II. The folly of forsaking, &c.** If we do so, we shall (1) incur the reproaches of our own mind; (2) forfeit the esteem and confidence of all good men; (3) forfeit the favour and incur the wrath of God. And for what are all those tremendous sacrifices made? For "the pleasures of sin," which are but "for a season"! **III. The danger of forsaking, &c.**—"shall be consumed." The threatened doom is (1) awful; (2) certain.—*J. H. Hobart, D.D., Posthumous Works*, ii. 220–229.

The Doom of the Apostates.

i. 28–31. *They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. For they (α) shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye (α) have denied, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.*

In modern days, when men "forsake the Lord," they become simply irreligious—practical atheists; but in ancient times such men became idolaters, they became worshippers of idols set up under the "oaks" planted on the hill-tops, or in gardens (β). It is almost impossible for us to understand the fascination of idol-worship, but it was very powerful, and the idols were made objects of passionate trust. They were regarded as the strength of those who served them. Trusting in their protection their votaries went forth confidently to battle. Defeat did not dispel this delusion; it was interpreted to mean merely that the god of the victors was mightier than the god of the vanquished. To men glorying in their false deities, and confiding in their protection, the prophet predicts utter destruction. You shall be consumed,

he says; the day is at hand when ye shall be caused to blush for your gods; you yourselves shall be withered oaks, and gardens without water; yea, your idols, and ye who have made them, for they are but things, the work of your hands, shall be burned together in unquenchable fire (γ). The theme of these verses is therefore *the doom of the apostates, and of the objects of their trust.*

I. Idolatry is still the sin of our race. It is not confined to "heathen" lands. There is need in this land for a proclamation of the first commandment. For what is idolatry in its essence? It is loving and trusting some being or thing more than God. Every man's God is what he lives for. Hence the declaration that "covetousness is idolatry; it is *one* form of the widespread sin. II. The confidence of men in their idols is still limitless and exultant. Every idolater is persuaded that that which he lives for is worth living for; this is the conviction of the miser, the ambitious man, &c. III. The time is at hand when the falsity of this confidence shall be exposed. There are coming upon those who cherish it calamities amid which they will seek in vain for comfort from their "idols." How often this is verified in daily life! In the withered, desolate condition of those who have forsaken the Lord how awfully is their folly demonstrated! IV. Yea, there is a day appointing in which all idolaters and their idols shall be consumed together. In the day of judgment the worshippers of Dagon, of Astarte, of Baal, and of Brahm will not be the only persons on whom utter destruction shall come: those who have made gold their confidence, &c., shall be burned up, together with their "gods." The objects of their trust shall be as powerless as is "tow" to resist flame, and they themselves shall be but as "sparks," swept away by the blast of the Divine indignation.

Application.—1. The day of judgment is a great reality; it is no mere dream of theologians. it is A TREMENDOUS FACT with which we shall soon be brought face to face. 2. This fact should govern us in selecting the object of our supreme love and trust. 3. It should prevent us from envying those who have forsaken the Lord, because of the temporary prosperity in which they are rejoicing (δ). 4. It should make us earnest in our endeavours to reclaim them from their apostasy while the day of Divine long-suffering and mercy still continues.

(α) In verse 29 is an instance of what seemed to Lowth's classical taste a corrupt reading—"They shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired." But this variation of the persons of the verb is not unusual in Hebrew, and certainly no corruption. Indeed, if we look at Psalm xci., which is very artistically constructed, we shall see reason to think that what jars so harshly on a classically trained ear was a beauty to the Hebrew poets —*Strachey.*

"Which ye have desired." He was speaking of "the sinners," he suddenly turns round to the men of his own generation, and says, "*You* are the men who are thus storing up shame and confusion."—*Kay.*

(β) In the judgments and the restoration which the prophet foretells, he declares that the people shall learn the worthlessness of the idols which they have been worshipping under the oak-trees, and in the sacred groves and gardens. The worship of the high places was partly a local worship of Jehovah, which only became irregular and blameable in later times; but there was also a widespread worship of Baal, Astarte, and Moloch, the old gods of the Canaanites and other nations, in sacred groves and gardens, as well as on the hill-tops —a worship of impersonated and deified sensuality and cruelty—which sometimes even established itself within the precincts of the temple itself, and was still more readily blended with, or substituted for, the worship of Jehovah in the high places. And this idolatrous worship was going on in Judæa during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham, at the same time with the temple services, as appears from 2 Kings xv. 3, 4, compared with 2 Chron. xxvii. 2. In the day of judgment and restoration, says the prophet, these men who have been flourishing in their sin like their oaks, and living in pleasures like those of their well-watered gardens, shall find that the idols to which these oaks and gardens are dedicated have no power to save them from a destruction which shall make them "as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water," images which will be the more forcible if we remember that in a southern climate trees fade rather from excessive heat than from season-

able cold, and a garden without water is a mere desert of sand. Then shall the strong, the mighty, and the unjust ruler become tow, and his idols, the work of his hands, a spark; they shall both burn together, and no man shall quench them.—*Strachey.*

(γ) The interpretation of verse 31 on which the above outline is based is that of Calvin and the earlier Protestant commentators. That which in modern days has been almost universally adopted, is given in the preceding extract from Strachey, and the homiletic use to which it may be put is indicated in the next outline: "The tow and the spark." We are persuaded, however, that the earlier interpretation is that which is most in harmony with the scope of the whole passage. All the ancient versions treat חֹסֶן as an abstract, meaning *strength*, and Dr. Alexander admits that "this agrees well with its form, resembling that of an infinitive or verbal noun." Latterly it has become the fashion to translate it "strong man," but the harmony of the whole passage is best maintained by rendering it "*their strength*," that is, that which the idolaters have regarded as their "strength," the deity in whose protection they have trusted.

(δ) O sirs! do wicked men purchase their present pleasures at so dear a rate as eternal torments, and do we envy their enjoyment of them so short a time? Would any envy a man going to execution because he saw him in a prison nobly feasted, and nobly attended, and bravely courted? or because he saw him go up the ladder with a gold chain about his neck, and a scarlet gown upon his back? or because he saw him walk to execution through pleasant fields or delightsome gardens? or because there went before him drums beating, colours flying, and trumpets sounding? &c. Surely no! Oh, no more should we envy the grandeur of the men of the world, for every step they take is but a step to an eternal execution.—*Brooks*, 1628–1680.

What reason have we to envy the wicked in their riches and prosperity? If a man be standing firmly on a river's bank, and sees another gliding gaily but inevitably down to a tremendous precipice below, shall he be envious of the pleasant sail that intervenes before the dread catastrophe? Shall he stand and envy him, and wish to exchange places with him? Oh no, but let him rather cry aloud, and warn him of his danger. Let him hasten to the rescue; throw out his arms with right good-will, and if it may be, save a soul from death.—*Nason.*

The Tow and the Spark.

i. 31. ***And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.***

For the phrases "and the maker of it," the margin reads, "and his work." So Alexander and Henderson. This reading renders the passage intelligible in meaning and terrible in import. It then in simple, vivid manner sets forth the reciprocal influence of the sinner and his sin. The man in committing sin degrades and enfeebles himself, and then the sin he has committed reacts upon his degraded and enfeebled nature to kindle in it the fire of its corruption. It is worth observing that these terrible words of warning are not levelled (1) against *low and vile people.* The term "strong" precludes that opinion. They are spoken against those who have been, or are still, esteemed, exalted, and powerful,—presumably against the princes, the judges, the counsellors of the nation (vers. 23–26). Nor are they spoken (2) against *the avowedly irreligious.* The people addressed performed a multitude of sacrifices (ver. 11), were punctilious in their attendance on the house of God, &c. (vers. 12–14), were full of apparent devotion (ver. 15). Nor (3) do they refer to *the grosser forms of sin.* These would of course come under the same condemnation. But spiritual sins, though more refined to our perception, are more fatal even than sensual sins. It is pre-eminently a spiritual sin in root, however sensual in fruit, that is here arrived at. It is all summed up in the one evil, "forsaking the Lord" (ver. 28). It is important to bear these considerations in mind if we would obtain personal and profitable application of these words. Consider—

I. The radical change sin works in the constitution of the sinner. Sin is lawlessness, an outbreak of self-will (1 John iii. 4). It is conscious wrong-doing (James iv. 17). And sin, the prophet says in effect, has a disintegrating, deteriorating, degrading influence upon the man's nature who yields to it. "The strong shall be as

tow." *Tow* is the coarse, broken part of flax or hemp—waste, refuse. Used here in contrast to that which is strong. Used also as pattern of what is inflammable. 1. *Sin lowers the tone and tenor of our nature.* Man's nature is originally a very high nature. "A little lower than the angels" (Ps. viii. 5); a little lower than *Divinity* (see Alexander and Thrupp *in loc.*) Originally a king with all highest forms of existence grouped around his throne (Ps. viii. 6–8). He falls by sin. How low? To level of beasts that perish? (Ps. xlix. 20). Lower than that (Isa. i. 3). To level of trees and shrubs? Lower than that. See, that heap of coarse and tangled refuse was a plant once, a living thing. Now it is cut down, dried, dead; choicest parts gone, wasted! "*Tow*"—that is the symbol of the sinful man. The height from which he has fallen measures the degradation incurred. To that which is by nature "tow," it is no degradation to be as "tow." But for that which is "strong" to become as "tow"—for the highest of God's creations to become as the lowest—this is disgraceful, dreadful. 2. *Sin, depraving and degrading the type and tenor of our nature, enfeebles our powers of resistance to the assaults of external evil.* Sin is weakness as well as wickedness; weakness as the result of wickedness. The "strong" becomes as "tow," becomes *weak.* Hard to tell which is the worse to bear, the paroxysms of remorse, or the paralysis of power which the habit of sin engenders (α). To feel that when some "temptation comes and calmly states itself before us" we are helplessly a prey to it, is terrible indeed. The first sin of any kind greatly facilitates a second commission of the same (β); and every repetition increases that facility till the ease of doing it almost amounts to a practical inability to abstain from doing it (γ). Sin gets *dominion* over us. Men are "sold under sin." 3. *Sin imparts to us an increased susceptibility to evil*—makes us more inflammable. Satan's "fiery darts" striking, inflame us (δ). Some counsellors advise young people to indulge in a certain measure of sin as a remedy for its enkindling impulses; they call it "sowing their wild oats." A figure is sometimes the best vail for a fact. One would think that "sowing" would of itself suggest reproduction and multiplied reproduction (Gal. vi. 7, 8) If you wish your nature to become hopelessly inflammable, utterly uncontrollable, give way to the indulgence of its hot impulses while you are young.

II. **The way in which the sinner and his sin co-operate for their common destruction.** We all know the influence of coming into contact with the instruments, the companions, the locality even, of a former sin. They stir up in us the memories, the emotions, the impulse to the same transgression. So the sinner goes about the world setting new snares for his feet at every turn as he sins. The relation of sin to the sinner and to his sinful deed is like that of a lamp placed between two mirrors, which reflect and re-reflect the light, till both the mirrors seem full of lamps. Sin is ever multiplying itself between the sinner and his sinful deed. And the issue is irremediable ruin. "They shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." And the moral is, that if we would keep out of hell, we must keep out of sin.—*W. Roberts, B.A.*

(α) One of the affecting features in a life of vice is the longing, wistful outlooks given by the wretches who struggle with unbridled passions towards virtues which are no longer within their reach. Men in the tide of vice are sometimes like the poor creatures swept down the stream of mighty rivers, who see people safe on shore, and trees and flowers, as they go quickly past, and all things that are desirable gleam upon them a moment to heighten their trouble, and to aggravate their swift-coming destruction.—*Beecher.*

(β) A brand that has been once in the fire easily catches the second time.—*Flavel*, 1630–1696.

Every commission of sin imprints upon the soul further disposition and proneness to sin; as the second, third, and fourth degrees of heat are more easily introduced than the first. Every one is both a preparative and a step to the next. Drinking both quenches the present thirst and provokes it for the future. When the soul is

beaten from its first station, and the mounds and earthworks of virtue are once broken down, it becomes quite another thing from what it was before. In one single eating of the forbidden fruit, when the act is gone, yet the relish remains; and the remembrance of the first is an easy allurement to the second. One visit is enough to begin an acquaintance; and this point is gained by it, that when the visitant comes again, he is no more a stranger.—*South*, 1633–1716.

(γ) Sin is like the descent of a hill, where every step we take increases the difficulty of our return. Sin, in its habits, becomes stronger every day—the heart grows harder, the conscience grows duller, the distance between God and the soul grows greater, and like a rock hurled from a mountain's top, the further we descend we go down, and down, and down, with greater and greater rapidity.—*Guthrie.*

(δ) It is in our own bosom that the power of temptation is found. Temptation is but a spark; and if a spark fall upon ice, if it fall upon snow, if it fall upon water, what is the harm of a spark? But if it fall upon powder—the powder is yours, the spark only is the devil's.—*Beecher.*

The power of temptation is in proportion to the nature of the soul tempted. A thoughtless miner takes an uncovered light into the mine: where there is but little gas, there is but a wavering and flickering of a transient flame,—hardly flame, indeed; but where there is an accumulation of gas, the uncovered light occasions an explosion which shivers the rocks and brings swift destruction upon all who are in the mine. In both cases it was the same mine, the same miner, but the condition of the air was different. So is it with the fiery darts of the wicked one; they are shot into all human hearts, and just in proportion to the materials, so to speak, which are to be found there, will be the success or failure of the enemy.—*Dr Parker.*

Isaiah's Vision of the Last Days.

ii. 1–5. *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw, &c.*

1. The marvellous power of the ancient prophets in giving embodiment and figure to the Word of God. It was a "word" that Isaiah saw; not that he heard, but that shaped itself before his vision, and made him glad, as if a new star had arisen to guide him. 2. Isaiah speaks with magnificent confidence as to the summing up of earthly dispensations. Casting his eye over all the uproar and tumults of intervening time, he sees a heavenly repose settling on the engagements and destinies of mankind. Herein is the peculiar power of the old prophets, viz., that they did not confine their attention within a brief and inadequate period, but projected their minds over historic spaces within which, so to speak, God had room to disclose somewhat of the proportions and significance of His plans. The whole year can never be judged from any one season. The prophets seemed to see things in their *wholeness*, and this made them calm in the midst of transitory confusion and distress. 3. The house of the Lord is to be exalted above all rivalry. The strength of the hills is to be a pedestal for the sanctuary. At the last right shall be uppermost, and holiness supreme. In the "last days" the house of the Lord shall exert a universal fascination; nation shall challenge nation to go up in holy and triumphant procession to the heights of Zion; and the voice of other allurements shall be lost in the infinite charm of the invitation. 4. Nor is this to be the indulgence of a mere sentiment; it will be the expression of a desire to be spiritually right, and thus to be spiritually secure: "He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths." Lawless sentiment is to have no place in spiritual discipline. We are not called to a high revel, but to a pure and tender obedience to an unchangeable law. 5. The house of the Lord is to be a centre of judgment and rebuke towards people who are living in impiety and political corruption. The consequence of this judgment, if properly received, will be the establishment and perpetuation of righteous peace. When the nations are right with God, they will be right with each other. Merely negative peace may be disturbed, but the peace which comes by righteousness will be its own guarantee of completeness and continuity. 6. All these blissful anticipations should constrain towards present obedience, and be fruitful of present joy. So the prophet thought when he exclaimed, O house

of Jacob, come ye, &c. Those who have great prospects should even now show themselves to be the heirs of glory. Christian joy is not all future. Even now, though we have to complain of so much of cloud and storm, there is a light that is distinctively divine, and under its benign rays we ought to walk until the fuller glory is revealed.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

The Latter-Day Glory.

II. 2–5. *And it shall come to pass in the last days, &c.*

Theme: *The Glory of the Latter Days.* "The last days," when men shall no longer need to offer the prayer, "Thy kingdom *come*." The glory of the latter days will consist—**I. In the exaltation of the Lord's house above all other institutions** (ver. 2). Now the Exchange, the Senate, the University, &c., are the great "mountains" of society; then the sanctuary will be supreme. In other words, religion will be the ruling force in society, dominating and directing all the others. This is the truth set forth by the figure of the upraising of Mount Zion above all the other mountains, "so as to be visible in all directions." **II. In universal submission to the authority of God** (ver. 3). Not by the Jews only (as in Isaiah's time), but by "*all* nations" (α), and not (as now) by some individuals merely, but by "all *nations*," will this authority be recognised and obeyed. Sin will be the exception, righteousness the rule. And so, as a consequence of this—**III. In universal peace among men** (ver. 4) (β). All contentions necessarily cease when men know and do the will of God. James iii. 14—iv. 1. Love towards man always results from genuine love towards God.

A contemplation of their glorious future is calculated—1. *To sustain us amid the sins and sorrows of our time.* When we look at the condition of the world as it is, we are tempted to despair. But there is a better day to come. In the widening diffusion of Christian truth, and in the growing power of Christian principle, even now we may see at least streaks of light which tell that the dawn is near. 2. *To animate us in our efforts to regenerate society.* These efforts are not in vain, though they sometimes seem so. We are working in the line of victory (1 Cor. xv. 58). 3. *The blessings of the future we can make our own now.* "O house of Jacob, come *ye*, and let *us* walk in the light of the Lord," that is, "in His paths" (ver. 3). We can make religion the supreme force of our life, and can act with a constant recognition of God's authority; and doing this, *we* shall have peace—with God, with ourselves, and in our homes. (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18).

(α) What words are these! What ideas! What radiances of glory and hope for the long-afflicted Church! Nations abolishing war and crimes, to cultivate righteousness and peace! nations emerging from ignorance and idolatry, to join themselves to the Church, and to walk in the light of the Lord! *How marvellous that words like these should proceed from the Hebrew prophets!* that men of the most confined education with regard to the Gentiles should thus lose the glory of Israel in the overflowing glory of the converted world! Can we ask for clearer proof that those holy men were purely the organs of the Holy Ghost, and transported in the spirit to publish the righteousness of God to every nation and language of the earth!—*Sutcliffe.*

I would urge the thoughtful consideration of these verses (2–9) on any one who is perplexed by the confident assertion of writers who prefer vague declamation to close investigation and reasoning, that the Hebrew prophets were actuated by a bitter hatred of foreigners. He will, I think, discover (from this and such like study) that they were possessed by views and hopes of a philanthropy which even our own times have not been able to extend: they longed for fellowship with all men, under the only conditions in which fellowship is possible; they desired an universal communion of virtue, humanity, and goodness, and could not be content to have a general licence of vice, brutality, and wickedness instead; and they advocated what they saw, and what all history has proved, to be the only way of avoiding the one and securing the other.—*Strachey.*

(β) This verse shows that there will come a time when men shall have found out that they are men and not brutes, and when they shall settle matters, not by the force of their animal powers, but by the force of superior intelligence.—*James Wells.*

The Future Triumphs of the Gospel.

ii. 2. *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it.*

This poetic imagery delineates the final and universal prevalence of religion. Christianity is a temple majestic and conspicuous, and all nations crowd its courts in united adoration. *There are many interesting indications that this prophecy is soon to be fulfilled,* such as—I. **The political aspect of the globe.** The vast political changes that have taken place during the last four centuries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America have all been favourable to the extension of Christianity. The area of Christian knowledge and influence has been steadily extending (a). **II. The progress of civilisation and of the arts.** A few years ago it required the painful labour of years to copy a Bible, and the wealth of a prince to purchase one: now the art of printing scatters the Word of God like autumn leaves, and it is found in the humblest dwelling. Then none could read but the learned few; now knowledge is becoming like the sunlight, everywhere diffused. War has long been one of the greatest obstacles in the way of human improvement; now various causes are operating to render it less frequent, such as (1) the rapid extension of piety, carrying with it the principles of peace; (2) the extension of enlightened views of national policy; (3) the transference of power from kings and nobles to the people, the victims of war, who will become its powerful opponents; (4) the invention of terrible engines of destruction, which will tend to deter nations from plunging into war. Slavery, too, is rapidly disappearing from the earth. The wonderful facilities of intercommunication which now exist are weakening and effacing national prejudices. All these causes are hastening on the promised millennium. **III. The present state of the sciences.** This statement seems to be contradicted by the attitude of many students of science towards Christianity. But we must remember that all the sciences in their infancy have been arrayed as hostile to scriptural truth—astronomy, geology, physiology, chronology; but one by one each of these sciences, as it developed and attained maturity, has passed over to the side of Christianity, and has powerfully helped to build up what it feebly and impotently laboured to destroy. That which hath been is that which shall be. In science the cause of revealed truth will continue to find one of her most ready and efficient helpers. **IV. The past achievements of Christianity foreshadow its eventful and perfect triumph.** The hostility of earth has marshalled every possible power, in every possible combination, against Christianity—the persecution of political power, the arguments of philosophy, satire, learning, poetry, wealth—and all in vain. The past triumphs of the religion of Christ show that it possesses an inherent energy which must inevitably make it triumphant over the world. The mighty influence which swept away the gods of Greece and Rome will not be baffled by the mud-idols of India. **V. The triumphant advances Christianity is now making indicate its universal extension.** *Application.*—What are *you* doing to hasten this certain and glorious triumph?—*J. S. C. Abbott, American National Preacher,* xvii. 169–176.

(a) All the might of the world is now on the side of Christianity. Those barbarous, inchoate powers which still cling to heathenism are already trembling before the advancing strides of the Christian nations; Christian just enough to rouse all their energies and to make them intensely ambitious, and on the alert to increase their own dominion, without having learned Christianity's highest lesson, the lesson of love.

Even that heathenism which seems to have some power is only waiting for its time of decay. In vast, undisturbed forests, whose interlacing branches exclude the light, moi-

ture is generated, and rills, fed by marshes and quiet pools, unite to form running rivers. But let the trees be cut down, and the ground be laid open to the sun, and the swamps will dry up, and the rivers run no more. So is it with the Brahmins, and all the effete teachers of heathenism. As long as the dense shadows of ignorance brood over the people, they will possess some little trickling power; but let the light of knowledge shine in upon the masses, and the channels of their influence will dry up and be forgotten.—*Beecher.*

THE LIGHT OF THE LORD.

ii. 5. *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

"The light of the Lord" streams upon us from His Word (Ps. cxix. 105). The knowledge of God and of His holy will which the Bible imparts to us is the meridian sun which casts his rays on the cold scenes of our earthly career. **I. The religion of the Bible illumines.** Into how many errors did unaided human reason fall, when the nature of God and of His operations was the subject of its inquiries! (α) Did not the wisest grope in darkness? Did they not conceive absurdities, even when man and his fate were the subject of their inquiries? (β) How full, clear, and steady is the light which the Scriptures cast upon these and other great subjects of human thought! **II. The religion of the Bible warms.** That God is great and all-powerful some philosophers imagined before the divine light of inspired truth shone forth; but the human heart remained cold, and felt in itself no point of contact and union with so exalted a Being. Until God said, "I am your Father," we were as orphans in a strange land; but then at once the world became to us as a parent's dwelling, and our heart began to warm with love towards God and man. **III. The religion of the Bible vivifies.** It animates and restores the weary, the dying! **IV. The religion of the Bible blesses**—now (γ), and for ever (1 Tim. iv. 8). —*G. Salomon, Twelve Sermons*, pp. 1–24.

(α) Men who seek God by reason and natural strength (though we do not deny common notions and general impressions of a sovereign power) are like mariners who voyaged before the invention of the compass, who were but coasters, and unwillingly left the sight of the land. Such are they who would arrive at God by this world, and contemplate Him only in His creatures and seeming demonstration. Certainly every creature shows God, as a glass; but glimmeringly, transitorily, by the frailty both of the receiver and beholder; ourselves have His image, as medals, permanently and preciously delivered. But by these meditations we get no further than to know what He doth, not what He is.—*Donne*, 1573–1631.

None but the true God can discover [make known] what the true worship of God is. As that glorious eye of heaven is not to be seen but by its own proper light,—a million of torches cannot show us the sun: so it is not all the natural reason in the world that can either discover what God is, or what worship He expects, without Divine and supernatural revelation from Himself.—*Arrowsmith*, 1602–1659.

(β) Reason sees that man is ignorant, guilty, mortal, miserable, transported with vain passions, tormented with accusations of conscience, but it could not redress those evils. Corrupt nature is like an imperfect building that lies in rubbish: the imperfection is visible but not the way to finish it; for through ignorance of the first design every one follows his own fancy, whereas, when the Architect comes to finish His own project, it appears regular and beautiful. Thus the various directions of philosophers to recover fallen man out of his ruins, and to raise him to his first state, were vain. Some glimmerings they had that the happiness of a reasonable nature consisted in its union with God, but in order to this they propounded such means as were not only ineffectual, but opposite. Such is the pride and folly of carnal wisdom, that to bring God and man together, it advances man, but depresses God.—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

All the days of sinful nature are dark night, in which there is no right discerning of spiritual things: some light there is, of reason, to direct natural and civil actions, but no daylight. Till the sun rise it is night still, for all the stars, and the moon to help them.—*Leighton*, 1611–1684.

(γ) It is a peculiar advantage of piety, that it furnisheth employment fit for us, worthy of us, hugely grateful, and highly beneficial to us. Man is a very busy and active creature, which cannot live and do nothing, whose thoughts are in restless motion, whose desires are ever stretching at somewhat, who perpetually will be working either good or evil to himself: wherefore greatly profitable must that

thing be which determineth him to act well, to spend his care and pain on that which is truly advantageous to him; and that is religion only. It alone fasteneth our thoughts, affections, and endeavours upon occupations worthy the dignity of our nature, suiting the excellence of our natural capacities and endowments, tending to the perfection and advancement of our reason, to the enriching and ennobling of our souls. Secluding that, we have nothing in the world to study, to affect, to pursue, not very mean and below us, not very base and unbecoming us, as men of reason and judgment. What have we to do but to eat and drink, like horses or like swine; but to sport and play, like children or apes; but to bicker and scuffle about trifles and impertinences, like idiots? What but to scrape or scramble for useless pelf, to hunt after empty shows and shadows of honour, or the vain fancies or dreams of men? What but to wallow or bask in sordid pleasures, the which soon degenerate into remorse and bitterness? To which sort of employments were a man confined, what a pitiful thing he would be, and how inconsiderable would be his life! Were a man designed only, like a fly, to buzz about here for a time, sucking in the air and licking the dew, then soon to vanish back into nothing, or to be transformed into worms, how sorry and despicable a thing were he! And such without religion we should be. But it supplieth us with business of a most worthy nature and lofty importance; it setteth us upon doing things great and noble as can be; it engageth us to free our minds from all fond conceits, and cleanse our hearts from all corrupt affections,—to conform the dispositions of our soul and the actions of our life to the eternal laws of righteousness and goodness: it putteth us upon the imitation of God, upon obtaining a friendship and maintaining a correspondence with the High and Holy One, upon filling our minds for conversation and society with the wisest and purest spirits above, upon providing for our immortal state, upon the acquist of joy and glory everlasting. It employeth us in the divinest actions—promoting virtue, performing beneficence, serving the public, and doing good to all: the being exercised in which things doth indeed render a man highly considerable, and his life excellently valuable.—*Barrow*, 1630-1677.

The Walk of the Soul in the Light of the Lord.

ii. 5. *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

There are many lights shining upon the paths of men in this world. There are the lights of science and philosophy; they beam out from the human mind, and are kindled by eager research and investigation. These have been advancing in splendour and in value, age by age, and will, no doubt, continue to do so to the end of time. Men walk in these lights, and vainly imagine that they have found the sun of the soul. They seek no higher illumination. They are mistaken. The lights of science are of but little service to the moral nature; they cannot chase away its darkness, or open up to it a vision of destiny. The True Light cometh down from above, and is Divine in its origin. It is bright. It is beauteous. It is sufficient for the guidance of the soul. Wise men will walk in it. "O house of Jacob," &c.

I. The walk of the soul. "Let us walk." 1. *The moral walk of the soul is a necessity.* The soul of man is endowed with certain convictions and activities which render inaction an impossibility. It must walk either in one direction or another; either toward moral purity or moral evil; either to Christ or to Satan. The moral sensibilities with which it is gifted, the laws under which it is placed, the influences to which it is subject, and the prospects that are stretched out before the soul, render moral progress a necessity of being. 2. *The moral walk of the soul is educational.* Men gain knowledge in this world by travel. In this way they augment their mental stores. And the soul gains knowledge, strengthens its capabilities, and deepens its experience, by walking forth into the great moral universe in which it lives. Only the souls that have walked in the paths of truth and life know what things are, and they only are able to guide others. 3. *The moral walk of the soul is healthful.* Those who are inactive are always physically weak. The soul that never takes moral exercise, that never gets out into the broad acres of truth, and that never climbs the great mountains of God, will ever be sickly. If the soul is to be strong, equal to the duties of life, and to the demands of being, it must not

indolently repose in its own quiet hiding-place. It must go forth to meet the Eternal. 4. *The moral walk of the soul is often perilous.* The traveller has often to walk through dark places, along difficult paths, and near the deep precipice. He is in a strange country. And so in the walk of the soul. It is in a land of which it knows but little. It has to pass through the dark mystery of truth, to traverse the windings of intricate problems, and to find its way, through perplexing circumstances, to the throne of God.

II. **The light of the Lord.** "In the light of the Lord." The soul of man was not constituted to walk in darkness. It was created with keen moral vision; but, alas! its eye is dimmed by sin, and is but seldom open to the light of heaven. 1. *This light is Divine in its origin.* It does not come from the orb in the heavens. It comes from beyond the clouds—from the Sun of Righteousness, whose rays are never lost in night. It is not the light of the finite, but of the Infinite. It is perennial and pure. It is unparalleled in beauty. It is unique in lustre. It is life-giving in its influence. The soul can walk in no better radiance. 2. *This light is clear in its revelation.* But for the sun we should know nothing of this world. And but for the light of the Lord we should be entirely ignorant of the moral world, in which the soul lives and has its being. This light which shines from the Spirit of God, from the Bible, and from the enlightened conscience, reveals the existence of God, the spirituality of His nature, the purity of His character, and the devotion of which He is worthy. It reveals the soul to itself, and bends it in humility, but in joy, as it unfolds the forgiving mercy of the Cross. But for this light of the Lord we should be ignorant of the things of the moral universe. It illumines the soul in its walk to the great and unknown future. 3. *This light is cheering in its influence.* The light of the sun is cheering to man, and is ever welcome to him. So the light of the Lord is cheering to the pure soul; it enlivens its energies, and lends new beauty to its visions. 4. *This light is abiding in its duration.* The light of the Lord will never go down from the pure soul, but will only brighten through death into the perfect day.—By what light do we walk? "Come ye," now, gladly, devoutly, "and let us walk in the light of the Lord."—*J. S. Exell.*

A Terrible Picture.

ii. 6–22.

Here is the "word" (vision) which Isaiah "saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (ver. 1). The prophet has been enraptured by the wondrous prospect of the distant future, when religion shall be the supreme force of life (ver. 2), and all men (vers. 2, 3), walking in "the light of the Lord," shall be at peace with each other (ver. 4): now he looks down to the present, and how dark and terrible is the picture which he sees before him! He sees—I. **A nation forsaken of God** (ver. 6). One of the most awful of all spectacles: an engine of tremendous power, without a driver, rushing down a steep incline! II. **A nation pursuing childish superstitions** (ver. 6): "They be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines." When a nation forsakes God, this is a common result (Rom. i. 21, 22). Witness the rapid spread in our own day of "spiritualism" among the sceptical and irreligious classes of England and America. III. **A nation seeking strength and safety in alliances with the enemies of God,** allying itself with the very powers which Omnipotent Righteousness was pledged to crush! Instead of dwelling apart, as God intended (Num. xxiii. 9; Deut. xxxiii. 28, &c.), and in dependence upon His protection, the Israelites sought to strengthen themselves by alliances with surrounding nations. "They please themselves with the children of strangers." The

same sin is repeated in these days, when God's people mix with worldly society for the sake of its "advantages." **IV. A nation blinded by external prosperity to its real condition and peril** (ver. 7). Abounding with every evidence of prosperity, how could they suspect that they were forsaken of God, and that a terrible doom was hanging over them? What is our condition, and what are our prospects as a nation? Let us not lay too much stress upon our great national wealth? **V. A nation given over to a debasing idolatry** (ver. 8; Rom. i. 23). A moral degradation extending to all classes (ver. 9). Just what we behold in Roman Catholic and Ritualistic churches, where rich and poor alike prostrate themselves before the wheaten wafer which their priest has transformed into a god! The prophet himself now becomes part of the picture, and we have—**VI.** The awful spectacle of a good man invoking the vengeance of Heaven upon the nation to which he belongs (ver. 10): "Therefore forgive them not." This was the natural cry of the prophet's soul, filled with horror and indignation at what he saw. The imprecations of Scripture are the natural (and fitting) utterance of righteousness in view of wickedness. It is only because the tone of our own spiritual life is so low that we are offended at them. From whom, among ourselves, does the cry for the uplifting of the strong arm of human law against the perpetrators of crimes of violence come? Not from the classes most likely to suffer from them, but from the refined and gentle, who, just because of their refinement and gentleness, are inspired by them with disgust and anger. So it is those who are most in sympathy with God who are most likely to burn with holy indignation against such things as the prophet saw. The men who offer such prayers as this, "Forgive them not," would be the first to reverse it did the offenders give any sign of repentance. **VII. A crushing doom impending over an unsuspecting nation.** No sooner has the prophet uttered his prayer, than he sees it was needless, and that the thunderclouds of the Divine anger were already thickly massed over the guilty nation; without any visible sign there was gathering over them a storm that would suddenly break forth with destructive force. Therefore he breaks out into a strain of impassioned warning and appeal to the very men for whose punishment he had prayed (ver. 10, &c.)

What lessons shall we learn from our survey of this dark picture? 1. *Not to judge of the relations of nations, individuals, or ourselves to God by the test of temporal circumstances.* It is an old but gross fallacy that temporal prosperity is a sure sign of the Divine favour (Eccles. ix. 1–3; Job xxi. 7–15, &c.) (α). Let us not ask what our circumstances are, but what our character is, and what our conduct has been. If we are unrighteous, temporal prosperity should alarm us, as a sign that God has forsaken us (Heb. xii. 8). 2. *Not to be hasty to impute the temporal prosperity of the wicked to a slumbering of the Divine justice.* We need scarcely trouble ourselves to pray for a doom upon the ungodly (Exod. xxxiv. 7; 2 Pet. ii. 3; Job xxi. 17, 18; Ps. lxxiii. 18, 19; Isa. iii. 11). 3. *Let us remember that we ourselves, as sinners, are exposed to the Divine judgments, and let us "enter into the Rock"*—"the Rock of Ages," that, sheltered in Him, we may be safe when the storms of the final judgment shall burst upon our guilty world.

(α) When the Lord hath set thee up as high as Haman in the court of Ahasuerus, or promoted thee to ride with Joseph in the second chariot of Egypt; were thy stock of cattle exceeding Job's, "seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen;" did thy wardrobe put down Solomon's, and thy cupboard of plate Belshazzar's when the vessels of God's temple were the ornature,—yet all these are but the gifts of Wisdom's left hand, and the possessors may be under the malediction of God, and go down to damnation.—*Adams*, 1654.

The eagles and lions seek their meat of God. But though all the sons of Jacob have good cheer from Joseph, yet Benjamin's mess exceeds. Esau shall have the prosperity of the earth, but Jacob goes away with the blessing. Ishmael may have outward favours, but the inheritance belongs to Isaac.—*Adams*, 1654.

God's People Forsaken.

Heb. xiii. 5. *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* Isa. ii. 6. *Thou hast forsaken Thy people the house of Jacob.*

How comforting is the Apostle's assurance! But do not the hope and courage which it inspires die out of us, when we hear this ancient prophet rise and testify, "Thou hast forsaken Thy people"? No! because before there is any light concerning this question in our understanding, our faith tells us there must be a way of harmonising these seemingly conflicting declarations. God must necessarily be faithful to His promise. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Were God to forsake any of His believing, expecting people, He would do more than forsake them—He would forsake *Himself!* He would put off His crown and lay aside His sceptre, and become one of ourselves. Then the whole universe would have cause to mourn in sackcloth and ashes; there would no longer be any God to whom we could make supplication in our sorrows.

I. **The first of these inspired declarations make it plain that God has a people whom He will never forsake.** In every distress and tribulation He will be with them. Though all other friends may fail them, God will continue faithful to them. When the most devoted of human friends *could* not be of any avail, God will be their succour—when bereavement has broken their heart; when persecution or temptations are threatening to sweep them away; in the hour of death.

II. **The second of these inspired declarations makes it plain that those who have been accounted the people of God may be forsaken by Him.** This is a declaration that would smite us with dismay, and plunge us into saddest confusion, were we to put a full stop where the prophet has put a comma. Why had God forsaken His people, the house of Jacob? Because they had first forsaken Him: they had first voluntarily ceased to be His people. The truth in this matter may perhaps be best apprehended by means of a Scriptural symbol. God compares the union that exists between Him and His people to that which exists between a man and his wife. Will a good husband ever forsake his faithful wife? The bloom and beauty of her youth may have gone; a wasting sickness may have rendered her positively unlovely, but will he forsake her? Never! Her misfortunes will only cause him to cherish her with a tenderer love. But if she be unfaithful to him, what then? Why, then, the whole case may be altered. If he be a merciful as well as a just man, he may seek to reclaim her; but if she be "joined to her lovers," and persistently heedless of all his claims and her duties, the time will come when he will leave her to her fate. To him she will be as if she were dead. So God is wondrous in His forbearance towards His backsliding people; but if they persist in their apostacy, He will leave them to the gods whom they have chosen (Judges x. 13, 14; Jer. ii. 28). We see now that between these apostolic and prophetic utterances there is the most perfect harmony. Our discussion of this subject should teach us—1. *Not to found conclusions upon fragments of God's sayings or doings.* His words and His works are mutually explanatory; but we must not cut the explanations short! If we put periods where God has only put commas, we shall be plunged into frightful perplexities; with the words of Scripture on our lips, we shall have most damnable heresies in our hearts. Our study of God's word must be comprehensive. So also must our study of God's providence. Let us not be in a hurry to come to conclusions. Wait, and we shall have more light, because we shall not be looking at parts, but at wholes. Our life is being written in clauses, and not till the last is completed shall we be able to interpret the first aright (α). 2. *Not to build too much upon past submissions to the Divine will and past enjoyments of the Divine favour.* "Once in grace always in grace" is an

ignis fatuus which has lighted many a soul down to hell. If after being fenced around as a garden of the Lord, and tilled by the great Husbandman, and watered by dews and rains from heaven, we relapse into mere desert ground, we may be sure we are nigh unto cursing (Heb. vi. 4–8). 3. *That those who are humbly and loyally faithful to their Heavenly Friend cannot be too confident of His faithfulness to them.* Assuredly He will never forsake them (Isa. xliii. 2). And His presence is all they need. Having Him they have all things (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12).

(α). The Lord has reasons far beyond our ken for opening a wide door, while he stops the mouth of a useful preacher. John Bunyan would not have done half the good he did, if he had remained preaching in Bedford, instead of being shut up in Bedford prison.—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

However contradictory the designs of Providence at first appear to be, if we set ourselves to watch God in His works and ways, with care, we shall soon discover that He acts according to some certain scheme or plan.

Were a person altogether unacquainted with architecture to visit some splendid temple in the process of erection, and observe the huge rough stones, and boards and timbers, iron castings, bricks, lime, mortar, lying scattered in confusion all around; were he to see one group of workmen cutting up material here, another digging trenches there; one party raising a staging on this side, another nailing on some boards on that: were he to observe the blocks, the fragments, dust, and rubbish, tools and instruments, all lying in disorder round about him, he might truly say that he could see no plan or system in the business; nor would he be likely to conceive or dream that out of such a chaotic mass of raw material, out of such contradictory labour, there could ever rise a magnificent temple, to reflect undying honour on the architect, and beautify the world!

But let the observer stop, and set himself to watch from day to day the busy work as it goes on; let him patiently examine, not only the minutest details, but also try to obtain a view of the general scope and bearing of the whole, and he will not be long in finding out that some superior mind controls and regulates the movements in accordance with some preconceived plan or system, which is constantly developing itself; and that every stroke of every workman is conducive to the same ultimate effect.

And when he comes to see the "beau ideal" of the builder realised in the fair proportions, in the classic beauty of the noble structure, he then perceives how inconsiderate, how unfair it was in him to decide upon a work in its incipient state, without some knowledge of the plan and the design of it.

God is building up the Christian in accordance with a perfect plan into a majestic temple for the decoration of the eternal city. And though His dealings sometimes seem to be mysterious; though He seems to cut down here and to raise up there, to let the light into this part and to leave it dark in that; though it is hard to tell at times what such material is designed for, what this or that work means, or to conceive how the structure when completed will appear; it is nevertheless quite certain that God acts according to a fixed and unalterable plan; that every stroke we bear, or loss we mourn, is made subservient to the end; and although it is given us here to see only in part, whoever will take the pains to watch with care the course of Providence, will be convinced that it does not move along by chance, but that everything is done by a prospective plan.—*E. Nason.*

Forsaken of God.

ii. 6. *Therefore Thou hast forsaken Thy people, &c.*

The doctrine of this verse is, that when men forsake God, God forsakes them. There is nothing arbitrary in such divine withdrawals (α); they have always a moral cause; and no man has any right to complain of them (Hosea xiii. 7). Consider **I. When men forsake God.** Men forsake God—(1) when they set their affection on forbidden things; (2) when they cease to seek Him in prayer and the other means of grace; (3) when they give themselves up to the practice of sin. **II. When men are forsaken of God.** This doom befalls them—(1) when they are left without that aid of the Holy Spirit, without which they cannot vividly apprehend the truth; (2) when they are left without the comfort of God's mercy; (3) when they are left without earnest desires after God, and consequently a prey to all the evil within and around them. **III. Men may be forsaken of God in the midst of temporal prosperity.** There may be a terrible contrast between their spiritual and material condition (ver. 6, 7). Temporal prosperity is from God, it

is designed to lead men to repentance (Rom. ii. 4); failing to accomplish this, it drives them further from God (Deut. viii. 11–14); Prov. xxx. 9; Neh. ix. 25); and when it has this effect upon them, the doom of which our text speaks to us is not far off (Deut. xxviii. 48) (*β*). **IV. No man need remain thus forsaken of God.** 1. God desires to bring all men into fellowship with Himself (ver. 3, 4). 2. All are invited to come to Him (ver. 5). 3. The light of God's countenance is offered them, especially in Christ, who is "the light of the world."—*John Johnston.*

(*α*) **In common conversation, we frequently speak of solar eclipses.** But what is called an eclipse of the sun is, in fact, an eclipse of the earth, occasioned by the moon's transit between the sun and us. This circumstance makes no alteration in the sun itself, but only intercepts our view of it for a time. From whence does darkness of soul, even darkness that may be felt, usually originate? Never from any changeableness in our covenant God, the glory of whose unvarying faithfulness and love shines the same, and can suffer no eclipse. It is when the world gets between our Lord and us, that the light of His countenance is obstructed, and our rejoicing in Him suffers a temporary eclipse.—*Salter.*

(*β*) When the king removes, the court and all the carriages follow after, and when they are gone, the hangings are taken down; nothing is left behind but bare walls, dust, and rubbish. So, if God removes from a man or a nation, where He kept His court, His graces will not stay behind; and if they be gone, farewell peace, farewell comfort: down goes the hangings of all prosperity; nothing is left behind but confusion and disorder.—*Staughton*, 1628.

The Material and the Moral.

ii. 6–9. *They be replenished from the east, &c.*

We have here the indictment which the prophet brings against Israel. It consists of three counts: 1. That the people had adopted the superstitions of the surrounding nations. 2. That the government had accumulated treasure and organised a cavalry force, in direct disobedience to well-known Divine injunctions (Deut. xvii. 16, 17). 3. That rich and poor alike had abandoned themselves to idolatry. But these verses may be taken also as Isaiah's *description* of Judæa in his day; and so regarding them, we find in them an instructive combination of the material and the moral. According to modern ideas, so far as the description concerns the material, it is exceedingly bright. An observer who regarded only the material—such a man as we can conceive of as being sent out as a "Special Commissioner" by the *Daily Telegraph* or the *New York Herald*—would have given a glowing account of Judæa at that period: an overflowing exchequer, a powerful army, evidences of wealth and prosperity on every hand, &c. But the prophet, looking only at what is moral, gives an account that is lurid and dark in the extreme: he sees only cause for lamentation and foreboding. So we reach the first of the lessons on which I intend to insist to-day, viz., **I. That the most diverse reports may be made truly concerning the same community.** St. Paul visited Athens, and we have a touching account of the effect of that city upon him (Acts xvii. 16); to him it presented a pitiable spectacle; but what a different effect would have been produced upon a mere man of culture, and what a different account he would have given of that metropolis of art! What very different accounts might be given of our own country from these two standpoints, the material and the moral!

II. When two reports of a community are given—one materially bright and the other morally dark—it is the latter only that a wise man will regard as important. For 1. *It is on the moral condition of a nation, and not on its material prosperity, that its happiness depends.* Increase of wealth does not necessarily mean increase of happiness. Frequently it means destruction of happiness; it always does so, when wealth increases faster than intellectual culture and moral restraint. In the absence of this moral restraint wealth is not a blessing, but a curse

2. *The material disassociated from the moral is transient.* Vicious prosperity is short-lived. By the luxury born of prosperity the virtues of industry, foresight, and self-denial, on which prosperity depends, are sapped. The health of the nation is lowered. Commerce becomes a gigantic system of gambling. Ruin is soon reached. Hence,

III. **Our chief concern as patriots should be to promote the moral well-being of our nation.** Those who uplift it in virtue are its true benefactors. All who minister to its material, intellectual, and artistic progress are worthy of gratitude; but most deserving of gratitude are those who inspire it with the fear of God, and with love for His laws. Hence,

IV. **Our chief concern as individuals should be for the moral and not for the material.** It is a very small matter to add house to house, and field to field: it is a very great thing to add virtue to virtue until we have succeeded in building up a symmetrical and noble moral character. A man's life—his true well-being depends not upon what he *has*, but upon what he *is* (α). And upon this, too, depends his eternal destiny. How childish, therefore, is the almost universal concern for mere material improvement! And how little have those to complain of who find themselves unable to accumulate wealth! The millionaire has soon to leave all his stores, and he speedily reaches a point at which all his bonds and notes become wastepaper. What a contrast between his experience, and that of the man who, having employed his life in a humble and diligent cultivation of virtue, finds that all unconsciously he has been laying all up for himself treasures in heaven! These two courses are open to us—to live for the material, or to live for the moral: which will you choose?

(α) A wise man looks upon men as he does upon horses; and considers their comparisons of title, wealth, and place, but as harness.—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

In the library of the world, men have hitherto been ranged according to the form, the size, and the binding. The time is coming when they will take rank and order according to their contents and intrinsic merits.—*E. Cook.*

A man may be outwardly successful all his life long, and die hollow and worthless as a puff-ball; and a man may be externally defeated all his life long, and die in the royalty of a kingdom established within him. That man is a pauper who has only outward success; and that man may be a prince who dies in rags, untended, and unknown in his physical relations to this world. And we ought to take the ideal in the beginning that a man's true estate of power and riches is to be in himself: not in his dwelling; not in his position; not in his external relations, but in his own essential character. That is the realm in which a man must live, if he is to live as a Christian man.—*Beecher.*

The Sinner's Danger and Refuge.

ii. 10. *Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty.*

This is the counsel which the prophet gives his fellow-countrymen, in view of the desolations which God was about to send upon their land on account of their sins. He sees God's judgments sweeping down upon them like an invading army, and therefore he cries to them, "Flee into the caverns in the mountains:" like the *Simoom*, and therefore he cries to them, "Hide yourselves in the dust: bow down before the destroying blast from which it is impossible to escape. God has been silent, as if He were indifferent to your transgressions, but now He is coming forth, in all the terrors of His majesty to requite the evil doers according to their works" (α). The counsel is, of course, metaphorical; the rocks and the dust could afford no refuge from an angry God. *The summons is to profound and penitential humility*, the proper attitude of man to God. It is a summons, therefore, which may be fitly addressed to all men. I. **Profound humility in regard to God would be befitting in us as creatures, even were we absolutely with-**

out sin. Such humility is reasonable —1. In view of our relation to and dependence upon God. He is our Maker; we are daily pensioners on His bounty; we are the instruments with which He carries out His purposes (ch. x. 15). 2. In view of His position as the Ruler of the universe. 3. In view of the transcendent excellencies of His character. The pupils of a great artist, such as Raphael, the associates of a great patriot, such as Washington, are filled with involuntary admiration and veneration for him. They feel themselves to be as nothing in comparison with him. How much more should we feel so in comparison with God! Those sinless beings who see Him as He is show us by their conduct what would be befitting in us even were we also without spot or stain (ch. vi. 2, 3). **II. But as sinners that which is befitting in us is, not only profound, but penitential humility.** To live without any sense of guilt in our hearts—with indifference to the fact that we have broken God's laws and are exposed to His judgments—is itself a gross iniquity; it is an outrageous defiance of the Majesty in whose presence we are. What would be said of a rebel who in the presence of his outraged sovereign should absolutely *ignore* him? Would not this be regarded as a repetition of his offence in the most aggravated form? But is not this precisely the offence which every stout-hearted sinner daily commits? As sinners there are two things especially incumbent upon us. 1. *To humbly acknowledge that we are exposed to the Divine judgments, and need a refuge therefrom.* There are two ways of contemplating the Day of Judgment: (1) As a certain and solemn fact in the history of our race. Contemplating it thus, we may show argumentatively that such an event ought to occur; and we may anticipate to some extent the principles upon which the Judge, when He shall have summoned mankind before His bar, will proceed. We may do this, and be merely theological or rhetorical. Or (2) we may regard it as a certain and terrible fact in our *own* history. And it is thus that we should regard it. It is *we* who are to stand before the great White Throne. A realisation of this fact will powerfully affect our feelings and our conduct; we shall (1) acknowledge, at the least, that *we need a refuge.* And we shall be prepared (2) *thankfully to avail ourselves of the refuge which God in His mercy has provided for us.* With yet greater fulness and definiteness of meaning God's messengers can repeat the prophet's counsel, "Enter into the rock, &c." The sinner's refuge is the Son of God, "the Rock of our salvation." Our refuge from God as our Judge is God Himself as our Saviour. It is as such that He now reveals Himself to us. "Behold *now* is the day of salvation;" but the day of judgment is at hand! Ere it burst upon us, let us flee unto "the Rock of Israel" (ch. xxx. 29) crying to Him, with penitent confession of our sins,

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee."

(a) "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, their sin is hid" (Hosea xiii. 12). Not that his sin was hid from God, but his sin is hid; that is, it is recorded, it is laid up against a day of reckoning. That this is the meaning, is clear by the foregoing words, his iniquity is bound up: as the clerk of the assizes binds up the indictments of malefactors in a bundle, and, at the assizes, brings out the indictments, and reads them in court, so God binds up men's sins in a bundle; and, at the day of judgment, this bundle shall be opened, and all their sins brought to light before men and angels.—*Watson*, 1696.

The Great Dethronement.

ii. 18. *And the idols He shall utterly abolish.*

There are a great number of things which would be incredible if they had not actually happened! Men who, like ourselves, boasted of "reason" and "common sense," sought to settle their disputes and to vindicate their honour by the duel; they have stoutly believed in witchcraft, in "touching for the king's

evil," and in other absurdities. But surely the supreme folly of which men have been guilty is idolatry. That men should fashion an idol of wood or stone, and then bow down to worship *it*, what absurdity is this! Yet **I. The idols have had a long reign in the earth.** Trace human history back as far as all extant records will enable you to do so, and you will find idols enthroned in the affections of men. That they should ever have been set up there must be regarded as one of Satan's subtlest and greatest triumphs. The instincts that lead men to worship are so strong, that his only hope of preventing fallen men from returning to their allegiance to God lay in persuading them to worship some other thing or being. His difficulty and his device were those of Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 26–28). He seems to have led men down step by step: stars, images as their respresentatives, then the images themselves: first, natural principles, then living creatures in which these principles were supposed to be embodied, then the living creatures themselves. To have begun at the end would have been too great a shock; the absurdity as well as the wickedness of such worship would have been too obvious. Thus was the empire of the idols founded, and it continues to this day. **II. The empire of the idols has been world-wide.** It might have been supposed to be a folly that could be imposed only on a few barbarous tribes, and that all civilised nations would have rejected it with disdain; but as a matter of fact, it is precisely among these nations (Egypt, Greece, Rome, Judæa, India) that idolatry flourished most and in its basest forms. Hence the empire of idolatry was co-extensive with the globe. In Elijah's time even God thought it a great thing that He would assure His prophet that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings xix. 18). **III. The idols have been served with passionate devotion.** In almost all ages worshippers of idols have put to shame the worshippers of God, by their fidelity to their convictions, the scrupulousness of their observance of the rites which they have esteemed religious, and the greatness of the cost at which they have done honour to their gods. **IV. The idols have had for their allies the most influential of social and moral forces.** Their priests and dependents (Acts xix. 25) have jealously watched every encroachment on the empire of their gods. Rulers, for political reasons, have strenuously endeavoured to uphold the national faiths. Custom and fashion have wrought in the same direction But, above all, the idols have had their most powerful allies in the human breast—in the instinct of worship, and the craving for sensual indulgences. *Idolatry has combined these most powerful of all cravings*—has provided deities in whose worship the worst passions of man's animal nature have been gratified. **V. Nevertheless the empire of idolatry shall be utterly destroyed.** It shall vanish as utterly as the great empire of Assyria. "The idols He shall utterly abolish." Already that empire has been overthrown where it seemed most firmly established, and the complete fulfilment of the prediction of our text is obviously now only a question of time. Even in heathen countries, men are becoming ashamed of their idols, and are representing them as merely the *media* of worship. The victory of Christianity over idolatry is already assured. The struggles that are yet to shake the world will be, not between Christianity and idolatry; not even between Christianity and atheism, for atheism is necessarily merely a brief episode in human experience; but between Christianity and other forms of monotheism

APPLICATION. 1. *In the wide-spread and long-continued empire of the idols we have a conclusive proof of man's need of a Divine revelation.* The natural progress of fallen man is not to light, but to darkness (Rom. i. 21–23; 1 Cor. i. 21). 2. *In the prediction of our text, we have a conclusive proof of that in the Bible we have such a revelation.* Consider the circumstances of the prophet: idolatry on every hand, corrupting even His own people. It was contrary to all ex-

perience; it must have seemed to many who first heard it as the ravings of a lunatic. Such a prediction, already so marvellously fulfilled, came from God! **3.** *In the approaching complete fulfilment of the prediction of our text, let us rejoice.* And let us labour as well as pray, that the time may be hastened when by idolatry God shall be no longer dishonoured nor man degraded.

Man's Insignificance and God's Supremacy.

ii. 22. *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?*

In this verse the whole Bible is summed up. The folly of trusting in man, and the necessity of trusting in God alone, is its great lesson, from its commencement to its close. This is what we are taught—**I. By its record of God's providential dealings with the Jews and other nations.** Continually He has accomplished His ends by very different means than man would have selected. Egypt saved from perishing by famine through the instrumentality of a young slave; Naaman delivered from his leprosy through the ministration of a little maid; Israel rescued by Gideon and his three hundred soldiers; the boastful Philistines defeated by a young shepherd, &c. **II. By the grand scheme of human redemption which it discloses.** In it God is everything, and man nothing. The only means by which man can be restored to holiness, to the Divine favour and life everlasting, were provided by God; man contributed nothing either to its completeness or efficiency. The benefit is man's, the glory all belongs to God. Nor in appropriating it does he do anything that is meritorious. In repentance there is no merit: it is simply that state of mind which is required of us in view of the sins we have committed. Nor in faith; it is simply the recognition of the ability of another, and the consequent entrustment of ourselves to Him, to do that for us which we confess our inability to do for ourselves.—Blessed is the man, and he only, who has learned these two things. So long as a man depends on his own wisdom, power, and goodness, or on the wisdom, power and goodness of other men, he must be disquieted and unhappy. We can attain to substantial quiet and an abiding satisfying peace only when we feel that our dependence is on a Being omnipotent, independent, and supreme, as well as abundant in truth and love (Isa. xxvi. 3).—*Joseph Holdech, D.D., American National Preacher*, xxxvi. 255–265.

Lessons from a National Bereavement.

(*Sermon preached on the Sunday after the death of President Harrison.*)

ii. 22. *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?*

The event which has just befallen us as a nation is fitted to teach—**I. The vanity of human dependence.** The atheism of the human heart displays itself in a disposition to confide entirely in an arm of flesh. This is so in the family, the church, the nation. In various ways God endeavours to teach nations their real dependence upon Himself—by famine, by pestilence, by commercial disasters, by the death of their rulers. What "fools" we must be, and how "brutish" must be our understanding, if we do not lay to heart the lesson which He has now given us (Ps. cxlvi. 3). **II. The pettiness of party strife.** How much of selfishness, unkindness, anger, and untruthfulness does the spirit of party give birth to! How seldom politicans of opposite parties do each other common justice! How fierce are there rivalries! But how mean, how worthless, how unworthy appear the objects of their strife when death enters the arenas and waves his skeleton arm! What a great calm falls upon the agitated spirits of men! How noise

is hushed and excitement subdued! How like do the flushed and eager politicians seem then to silly children quarrelling for the possession of a bubble that has just been blown into the air, and that will disappear the moment it is grasped! (α). **III. The vanity of the world, the certainty of death, and the nearness of eternity.** These lessons are *taught* when a beggar dies, but are more likely to be *laid to heart* when a prince is laid low (β). **IV. The supreme importance of a right moral character.** Most instructive is the interest felt by survivors in the moral character of the departed, in the evidences of his preparation for death, in the manner in which the great summons affected him. This is the testimony of the human conscience, that in comparison with a fitness to appear before the tribunal of God, everything else loses its importance. When was the amount of a man's *possessions* inscribed on his tombstone? The bare suggestion of such a thing would be construed as a mockery of death, under whose denuding hand the rich man leaves the world naked as he entered it. But if, in all his life, there was one virtue in his moral character, one trait which can afford satisfactory evidence of God's approval, this, be sure, you will find sculptured in conspicuous characters on his monumental marble. One thing alone can prepare any for their last account—the belief and the practice of the Gospel of God. Have *you* the great calm which is inspired by the confidence of being thus prepared for the great change?—*W. Adams, American National Preacher*, xv. 97–105.

(α) Here, like a shepherd gazing from his hut,
Touching his reed, or leaning on his staff,
Eager Ambition's fiery chase I see;
I see the circling hunt of noisy men
Burst law's enclosure, leap the mounds of right,
Pursuing and pursued, each other's prey;
As wolves for rapine; as the fox for wiles;
Till Death, that mighty hunter, earths them all.
Why all this toil for triumphs of an hour?
What though we wade in wealth, or soar in fame?
Earth's highest station ends in "Here he lies"—
And "Dust to dust" concludes her noblest song. —*Young.*

(β) The glories of our birth and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate:
Death lays his icy hand on kings;
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill;
But their strong nerves at last must yield:
They tame but one another still;
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath,
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
Upon death's purple altar, now,
See where the victor victim bleeds!
All heads must come
To the cold tomb!
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.
—*Shirley*

The Death of Statesmen.

(*Funeral Sermon for the Right Hon. George Canning.*)

iii. 1, 3. *For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah . . . the counsellor, . . . and the eloquent orator.*

By the death of a great statesman at the head of a government, we are reminded.—**I. Of the weight of government in a fallen world.** It is a burden that has crushed many, and has brought them to an untimely grave. **II. Of the weakness of the shoulders of mortal men.** The government of a single country, especially in troublous times, has proved a burden too great for the courage and the endurance of the strongest of men. **III. Of the uncertainty of all human affairs.** Often does the statesman think of the uncertainty of arriving at the object of his ambition, but seldom of the

uncertainty of his remaining there, except when he recollects how many are struggling to replace him. Little does he think of another foe, who lurks behind, and who in some unexpected moment will hush his eloquent tongue, and turn his fertile brain to dust. **IV. Of our absolute dependence on the Supreme Governor.** We are apt to think that it is on the profound counsellor and mighty orator that the nation's welfare depends, and to think little of Him who made them what they are, to be employed as He pleases, laid aside when He pleases, and replaced if He pleases, by others as richly endowed. **V. Of the necessity of personal preparation for death** (α). —*J. Bennett, D.D., The British Pulpit*, i. 297–304.

(α) So live, that, when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, that moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not like the quarry slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon; but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams. —*Bryant.*

National Greatness.

iii. 1–8. *For, behold, &c.*

I. The elements of national greatness are intellectual and moral, rather than material. A nation may have "the staff of bread" and "the stay of water," but lacking the persons enumerated in ver. 2, 3, it cannot be a great nation. While, therefore, it is reasonable to put forth efforts to increase the material resources of the nation, we should be more concerned to improve the producers than the produce. **II. For the supply and continuance of these supreme elements of national greatness, we are absolutely dependent upon God.** Well to remember that for all material blessings we are *absolutely* dependent upon Him. The moral value of a bad harvest is often great; it reminds us that, do what the most skilful agriculturists may, it is "God that giveth the increase." Not less dependent are we upon Him for the *men* without whom no nation can be great. Wise statesmen, skilful inventors, eloquent orators, &c., are very special gifts of God; such men cannot be manufactured. **III. These essential elements of national greatness God will take away from those nations that are regardless of His goodness and defiant of His authority** (ver. 1, 8). National sins bring on national judgments. No national judgment is more severe or prolific of disasters than the removal or denial of great leaders. **IV. Not only can God abase the greatest nation, but He can reduce it to depths of humiliation which beforehand it would have regarded as inconceivable.** See through what stages of national sorrow and shame the prophet declared that Israel should be led. (1.) The diminution of its material resources and the removal of all its leaders of society (ver. 1–3). (2.) The government entrusted to weak and childish rulers (ver. 4). (3.) Social anarchy (ver. 5). (4.) Social degradation so extreme, that men are solicited to rule merely because they have a little wealth (ver. 6). (5.) The last stage of national degradation—its supreme places of authority have become so contemptible and perilous that no one can be induced to fill them (ver. 7).

These considerations concern us individually. The nation is but an aggregate of individuals; and what they are, it is. Hence it behoves us—1. *To strive after personal holiness.* This seems a very small remedy for national evils. But it is only by each man adopting it that the nation can be made religious. If each *drop* in the ocean could eliminate the salt with which it is charged, the *ocean* would become fresh. Besides, by our example we may stimulate others to personal reforms, and they again others. 2. *To entreat God to deal with us as a nation in the way of mercy, and*

not of judgment (Ps. ciii. 10). There is a mighty power in intercessory prayer. 3. *Diligently to promote all moral and social reforms.* We must labour as well as pray. A Christian man will assist in all political reforms, because it is the will of God that righteousness should prevail in all things. But much more interested will he be in all movements and institutions having for their end the intellectual and moral advancement of the people: the school, the temperance society, better dwellings for the working classes, the diffusion of a pure literature, &c. 4. *To put forth constant efforts to bring and keep our fellow-countrymen under the influence of the Gospel.* Of all regenerative and conservative influences the Gospel is the most active and powerful. A nation composed entirely of genuine Christians would be at once the most happy, prosperous, and powerful the world has ever seen. The direct and short way to exalt Great Britain is to strive to lead all our countrymen to the knowledge and service of Christ This is a work, not for ministers only, but for the whole Church. There would be more happy Christians if there were more working Christians. It is not the running brooks, but the standing pools, that become stagnant.

Shameless Sinners.

iii. 9. *They declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.*

Extremes are generally detestable: equatorial heat, arctic cold; the speaker whom we must strain to hear, the orator who roars, &c. So in morals: foolhardy rashness, cowardice; prodigality, penuriousness; hypocrites, and such shameless sinners as are spoken of here. Such persons are even more detestable than hypocrites; these at least pay this homage to virtue, that they array themselves in her outer garments. Desperate and vain is the endeavour to cloak iniquity, yet even this is better than the effrontery which leads some to flaunt it in open day. How surprising is such effrontery! When we consider what sin is—a thing horribly degrading to man as well as insufferably offensive to God—we should have expected beforehand that men would have been as anxious to hide their vices, as they are to conceal any loathsome disease with which they may be afflicted. But it is not so. There are tens of thousands of sinners as devoid of shame as were those who dwelt in Sodom; nay, they glory in their shame. Consider—

I. The Causes of Shamelessness in Sin.

1. **Ignorance.** There are many so uninstructed in moral and spiritual things; they have grown up surrounded by such evil examples, that they have no consciousness of the foulness of their vices, any more than a peasant has of the ungracefulness of his manners. This cause operates among the lower classes to an extent scarcely conceivable by the cultured and refined. 2. **Habit.** Many an open and shameless sinner, at the outset of his career, when he was first betrayed into transgression, was ashamed almost to walk through the street, and imagined that every one whom he met had heard of, and despised him for, his offence. But the offence was repeated; it became a habit; and in proportion as it has done so, has the offender's sense of shame died out of him. He thinks as little of it as a soldier does of his uniform, which when it was first put on caused him to think that all eyes were fixed upon him. 3. **A desire to silence conscience.** The effrontery is often assumed, just as the rustic traveller when near a churchyard whistles, not because he is courageous, but to keep his courage up. Conscience reproaches and warns, and the sinner seeks to silence it by greater desperation in wickedness. 4. **A seared conscience.** In the course just named the sinner too often succeeds. Conscience, defied and outraged, desists from her useless efforts, and gives herself over to an insensible lethargy; there will come an hour of terrible awakening; but meanwhile she is blind, deaf, dumb, and the sinner perpetrates the most

abominable iniquities without a blush (*a*). 5. **Infidelity.** The sinner has succeeded at last in persuading himself that what he wishes were true is true, and that there is no God, and, consequently, no day of judgment and no hell. As soon as men have cast off fear of God, it is easy for them to cast off fear of man. The ordinary fruit of infidelity is vice. What but prudence is left to restrain the infidel from partaking in the pleasures of sin? And how weak prudence is in any real contest with passion!

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SHAMELESSNESS IN SIN.

This is declared by the prophet to be woe—woe of peculiar intensity and awfulness. "Woe unto their soul!" &c. They stand in peril of the severest chastisements of the Divine justice—**1. Because shamelessness in sin is an aggravation of sin.** It is felt to be so in the home, in the nation. Disloyalty is an evil thing, but to break forth into open rebellion, and to take the field against the monarch, is worse. **2. Because shamelessness in sin adds to the contagiousness of sin.** One reason why sin is so hateful in the sight of God is because it renders every sinner a moral pestilence. Corrupt, he corrupts others (Eccles. ix. 18). But of shameless sinners this is especially true. 1. *They lead many to imitate them in their wickedness.* In every community these shameless sinners are ringleaders in vice and recruiting-sergeants for the devil. 2. *They confirm many in wickedness.* Many are "halting between two opinions," and these shameless offenders, by their example, and often by their persuasions, supply that which is needed to bring these irresolute ones to a decision for a life of iniquity. Thus they are soul-murderers as well as soul-suicides. Justice, therefore, demands that their punishment shall be especially severe. Their doom will probably be as manifest as their guilt.

APPLICATION. 1. *Let those who have been thus shameless in sin humble themselves before Almighty God.* Even for them to-day there is mercy (ch. lv. 7; i. 18). Let no sinner be deterred from seeking mercy by the greatness of his sins (Ezra ix. 6, with Ps. cviii. 4, and Rom. v. 20). Yet let no sinner presume further to transgress because God is so merciful. There is an awful warning in the gracious invitation (ch. lv. 6). 2. As ignorance is one main cause of shamelessness in sin, *let Sunday-school teachers recognise the importance of the task in which they are engaged.* Though they may not be able to point to individual conversions as the result of their efforts, they are not labouring in vain; by them the moral sense of the community is being raised. Evil as are our days, the testimony is conclusive that the former days were not better, but worse. 3. As habit is another main cause of shamelessness in sin, let *the young be anxiously on their guard against the formation of evil habits.* But habits grow from acts. A single action is consequently more important than it seems. There are certain actions which have in themselves a special decisiveness of influence. When a young man has once entered a bar parlour, he has entered upon the high way to drunkenness; he may not reach it, but he is on the high way to it. Another most decisive step towards shamelessness in sin is taken when a young person who has been trained under Christian influence joins a Sunday excursion. It is by this gate that millions have entered that path of open transgression, along which they have hastened to perdition. 4. *Let the people of God be very careful to leave shameless sinners without excuse.* It is by the inconsistencies of professing Christians that such persons endeavour to shield themselves from censure and to silence their consciences. Hence Eph. v. 15; Col. iv. 5; 1 Thes. v. 22.

(*a*) Blind and ignorant consciences speak peace, or hold their peace, because they have not skill enough to find fault; they swallow many a fly, and digest all well enough. While the scales were upon Paul's eyes, he was alive and quiet; he thought concupiscence, the sin and breeder of all sin, to be no sin. Such consciences discern sin as we do stars in a dark night,—see only the great ones of the first magnitude, whereas a bright even discovers millions; or as we see a few motes in the dark houses, which sunlight shows to be

infinite. Such think good meaning will serve the turn, that all religions will save, or a "Lord, have mercy on us," at the last gasp. The law which nature has engraven, they tread out with sins, as men do the engravings of tombs they walk on with foul shoes: they dare not look in the glass of God's law, which makes sin abound, lest the foulness of their souls should affright them. A number of such sottish souls there be, whose consciences, if God opens, as He did the eyes of the prophet's servant, they shall see armies and legions of sins and devils in them.—*Ward*, 1577–1639.

Cheering Words and Solemn Warnings.

iii. 10, 11. *Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat of the fruit of their own doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.*

Into these two orders, the righteous and the wicked, the Bible is accustomed to divide the whole population of the globe.—A crimson line runs between the righteous and the wicked, the line of atoning sacrifice: faith crosses that line, but nothing else can. There can be no righteousness where there is no faith.—This distinction is so sharp and definite, that no man can dwell in a borderland between the two conditions. A clear line of demarcation exists between life and death, and such a division is fixed by God between the righteous and the wicked. There are no monstrous nondescripts, who are neither sinners nor saints. This text ought, therefore, to lead to great searching of heart.

I. **The well-being of the righteous.** 1. *It is a great fact that it is well with the righteous.* It is well with him *always:* in prosperity, which is a time of peril; in persecution, which is hard to bear; in childhood, manhood, and old age; in time, and throughout eternity. 2. *We are assured of this fact on Divine authority.* Reason might assure us of it, but it is better to have it under the hand and seal of omniscience. If thou canst not see it, let God's word stand thee instead of sight. 3. *It is the will of God that His people should know this great fact.* He would have his saints happy, and therefore He says to His prophets, "Say ye," &c. 4. *With God's people it is emphatically "well."* When God says it is "well" with a man, it must be well indeed. 5. *There are many obvious reasons why it is well with the righteous.* (1.) His greatest trouble is past. His greatest trouble was the guilt of sin. (2.) His next greatest trouble is doomed. The dominion of sin over him shall speedily come to an end. (3.) His best things are safe. His treasures are in heaven. (4.) His worst things work only for his good. (5.) He is well *fed*, for he feeds upon Christ; well *clad*, for he wears the imputed righteousness of Christ; well *housed*, for he dwells in God who has been the dwelling-place of His people in all generations; well *married*, for his soul is knit in bonds of marriage union to Christ; well *provided for*, for the Lord is his Shepherd. (6.) God has put within him many graces, that help to make things well; *faith*, which laughs at difficulties; *love*, which accepts them; *patience*, which endures them; *hope*, which expects a rest to come. (7.) Day by day, God the Holy Ghost visits him with fresh life and power. (8.) He has a bank that never breaks—the glorious "throne of grace;" and he has only to apply on bended knee to get what he will. (9.) He has ever near him a most sweet Companion, whose loving converse is so delightful that the roughest roads grow smooth, and the darkest nights glow with brightness. (10.) He has an arm to lean upon that is never weary, never feeble, never withdrawn. (11.) He is favoured with a perpetual Comforter, who pours wine and oil into every wound, and brings to his remembrance the things which Christ has spoken. It is well with the righteous in life, well when he comes to die, and well after death. 6. *The blessedness of the righteous rests upon a solid ground.* The text says, "they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Those are the only terms upon which

the old covenant can promise that it shall be well with us; but this is not the ground upon which you and I stand under the gospel dispensation. Absolutely to eat the fruit of our doings would be even to us, if judgment were brought to the line and righteousness to the plummet, a very dreadful thing. Yet there is a limited sense in which the righteous man will do this. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat," &c., is good gospel language; and when the Master shall say, "Inasmuch as ye did this unto one of the least of these my people, ye did it unto me," the reward will not be of debt, but still it will be a reward, and the righteous will eat the fruit of his doings. I prefer, however, to remark, that there is One whose doings for us is the ground of our dependence, and we shall eat of the fruit of His doings.

II. The misery of the wicked. To expound the woe pronounced against him, you have only to negative all that I have already said about the righteous. It is ill with the wicked; always ill with him; we know *this* on Divine authority; it is emphatically "ill" with him; and it shall be ill with him for ever(α). But *why* is it ill with the wicked? 1. He is out of joint with all the world. Ordinary creatures are obedient to God, but he has set himself in opposition to the whole current of creation. 2. He has an enemy who is omnipotent. 3. His joys all hang on a thread. Let life's thread be cut, and where are his merriments? 4. After these joys are over, he has no more to come. 5. Of all the comforts and hopes of the righteous, he is utterly destitute.—*C. H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. xiii. 13–24.

(α) Many sinners who seem so jocund in our eyes have not such merry lives as you think. A book may be fairly bound and gilded, yet have but sad stories writ within it. Sinners will not tell us all the secret rebukes that conscience gives them. If you will judge of Herod by the jollity of his feast, you may think he wanted no joy; but at another time we see that John's ghost walked in his conscience. And so doth the Word haunt many, who appear to us to lay nothing to heart. In the midst of their laughter, their heart is sad: you see the lightning in their face, but hear not the thunder that rumbles in their conscience.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

Suppose a man were in prison, committed for some great offence, and condemned to die under the displeasure of his prince or state, and his servant should come to him, saying, "Sir, be of good comfort; your wife is well at home; you have very sweet children, an excellent crop of corn; your neighbours love you dearly; your sheep and cattle thrive, and all your houses are in good repair." Would he not answer that servant, "What is all this, so long as I am condemned to die"? Thus is it with every wicked man. He is under the displeasure of the great God, a condemned man, and God is angry with him every day; and if his heart were open to be sensible of it, he would say, "You tell me of my friends, and goods, and name, and trade; but what is all this, so long as I am a condemned person, and God is angry with me every day I rise?"—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

Who would think, now, that sees how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live, that they must very shortly lie roaring in everlasting flames? They lie down, and rise, and sleep as quietly; they eat and drink as quietly; they go about their work as cheerfully; they talk as pleasantly, as if nothing ailed them, or as if they were as far out of danger as an obedient believer. Like a man that hath the falling sickness, you would little think, while he is labouring as strongly and talking as heartily as another man, how he will presently fall down, lie gasping and foaming, and beating his breast in torment! so it is with these men. They are as free from the fears of hell as others, as free from any vexing sorrows, not so much as troubled with any cares of the state of their souls, nor with any sad and serious thoughts of what shall become of them in another world; yea, and for the most part, they have less doubts and disquiet of mind, than those who shall be saved. Oh, happy men, if they could be always thus; and if this peace would prove a lasting peace! But, alas, there is the misery! it will not. They are now in their own element, as the fish in the water; but little knows that silly creature when he is most fearlessly and delightfully swallowing down the bait, how suddenly he shall be snatched out, and lie dead upon the bank; and as little think these careless sinners what a change is near. The sheep or ox is driven quietly to the slaughter, because he knows not whither he goes; if he knew it were to his death, you could not drive him so easily. How contented is the swine when the butcher's knife is shaving his throat, little thinking that it is to prepare for his death! Why, it is even so with these sensual, careless men; they fear the mischief least, when it is nearest to them, because they see it not!—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

The Great Law of Recompense.

iii. 10, 11. *Say ye to the righteous, &c.*

This is the testimony of *conscience;* conscience testifies that that which is here predicted ought to take place—that the condition and circumstances of men ought to be conformed to their character. This is the testimony of *reason:* in its clearest, calmest, strongest hours, it endorses this testimony of the conscience. This is the declaration of *Almighty God:* He here promises that He will do that which conscience and reason agree that He ought to do. Thus we have here a conclusive concurrence of testimony, and the truths announced in our text should be recorded in our memory as absolutely certain.

These declarations remind us of two things. **I. That we are living now in a season of probation.** These messages are much needed, because we are surrounded by much that is perplexing. Here and now fidelity to conscience often entails much loss, sorrow, and suffering. Many of the wicked are prosperous and triumphant. Iniquity *pays.* Moreover, the sufferings of the righteous and the successes of the wicked are often lifelong. This contrast between what ought to be and what is, has been a source of moral disquietude in all ages (Ps. lxxiii., &c). Yet it is absolutely necessary. Without this moral obscurity there could not have been any moral probation. There is no temptation in prussic acid, because its deadly qualities are indisputable, and because they operate instantaneously. If all sins had their penalties as clearly and closely tied to them, vice would be impossible. And so would virtue! Obedience to the Divine will would then be, not an act of choice, but the result of an irresistible moral compulsion, and it would have in it no morally educational influence, and nothing to render it acceptable to God. Not by chance, then, not by mistake, not as the result of a harsh and unloving decree, but as the result of ordinances of the highest wisdom and grace, we are now living in a season of moral probation. But, **II. We are hastening on to a season of rectifications and rewards.** Conscience and reason attest that there *ought* to be such a season, and the Scriptures assure us that there *shall* be (Eccles. xii. 14; Rom. ii. 6–10, &c.)

The great facts of which our text reminds us, 1. *Should give calmness and steadiness to our faith.* We should not be greatly moved either by the distresses of the righteous or the triumphs of the wicked. These are most transient. The longest life is really a most inconsiderable episode in our being. This is but the beginning of our voyage; what matters it whether we clear out of port in a storm or amid bright sunshine? What will happen to us on mid-ocean is the only thing worthy of our concern. 2. *They should govern us in the decisions we have continually to make in life,* between courses that are right, but involve present suffering, and those which are pleasant, but wrong. The sick man who refuses to undergo the present pain which will assure him of future health, and prefers the transient ease which will presently give place to intolerable agony, is insane. Let us not imitate him in his folly. But if the rewards of every man's hands shall be given him, how shall *any* man be saved? This is precisely the difficulty which the Gospel was designed to meet. It is precisely because no man can be saved on his own merits that Christ came into the world, and died for every man, and now offers redemption to every man. This offer is made to YOU. For Christ's sake, the sins of the righteous shall be forgiven them; and for His sake likewise, they shall be rewarded according to their works (Matt. x. 42, xvi. 27; Heb. vi. 10, &c.) Between the doctrine of justification by faith and the doctrine of good works there is the most perfect harmony.

The Curse of a Weak Government.

iii. 12. *As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.*

"Children," "women," are not to be taken literally. In interpreting the second of these figures, we must remember the status of women in ancient times in the East. **I. A weak government is a curse.** 1. By such a government the affairs of a nation are mismanaged, its resources squandered, and its great possibilities unrealised. 2. A weak government always becomes in the end an oppressive government. By it the national burdens are caused to press most heavily on those least able to bear them. 3. Under such a government, privileged classes and monopolies multiply and grow strong, to the hurt of the nation at large. 4. Worst of all, and as the source of countless evils, government itself comes to be despised, and the national respect for law destroyed. In short, under a weak government a nation makes rapid progress towards anarchy. **II. The curse of a weak government is not long in overtaking a nation that gives itself up to luxury and loses its regard for moral considerations.** 1. It is only by such a nation that such a government would be tolerated. 2. By such a nation such a government is likely to be for a time most popular (Jer. v. 31).

The cures for political evils are not political but moral. Political remedies will but modify the symptoms. Political evils are really due to moral causes, and can only be removed by moral reformations. Hence, while good men will never neglect their political duties (no good man will neglect any duty), they will be especially in earnest to uplift the nation morally, and therefore will do their utmost to strengthen those agencies which have this for their aim—the church, the school, and those societies which exist for the diffusion of the Scriptures and of religious liberty Wherever the Bible becomes the book of the people, oppression by "children" becomes impossible, and the government of "women" is set aside.

Blind Leaders.

iii. 12. *O my people, they which lead thee (α) cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.*

This is at once a lament and a condemnation—a lament over the misfortunes of those who are misguided, a condemnation of their folly and wickedness in permitting themselves to be led astray. **I. Men need to be led.** 1. *This is our need as individuals.* Every day we need an answer to the questions, What ought I to do? Which way should I go? In the journey of life, we continually come to crossings at which we are conscious of our need of guidance. 2. *Guidance is still more necessary for men collectively.* What shall be the belief of a community? What its action? Like the apostolic band (John xxi. 2, 3), communities remain idle, undecided, until the born leader says, "I go a-fishing," and instantly they say to him, "We also go with thee." Men are naturally gregarious; like a flock of sheep they crowd and inconvenience each other, not knowing which way to turn, until one bolder than the rest breaks away from the flock, and then instantly the flock begins to follow him. **II. As a rule men are misled.** Boldness and wisdom do not always go together. Not seldom the courage which prompts men to become the leaders of others, and which goes so far to command the assent of others, is a compound of self-conceit and ignorance. Men are always prone to trust in the self-confident: they will believe the boastful quack rather than the diffident philosopher. Hence in

all ages men have been caused to err —the blind have been led by the blind. How true this is to-day in political matters, in social, in commercial, in religious! [Give instances.] On every hand, in all these realms of thought and action, there are those who can only rightly be described as leaders who cause the people to err. Yea, all men carry within them two leaders, in whom they are disposed implicitly to trust, but by whom in the majority of instances they are misled—reason and conscience. How absolute is the confidence placed in these guides, and how seldom it is justified! III. To be misled is one of the most terrible of evils. 1. It involves the loss of all the good to which right leadership would have conducted men. 2. It involves disappointment, shame, sorrow, and often irretrievable ruin. 3. It plunges men into painful perplexities, so that even when they have begun to suspect that the path they are pursuing is erroneous, they know not how to discover the true one; it seems to them to be "destroyed;" they search for it in vain. They are like travellers who, in the darkness following *Will-of-the-Wisp*, have strayed from the highway into a morass: to stand still is impossible, and yet to step in any direction, may plunge them into worse perils (Matt. xv. 14). How criminal is the conduct of those who betray their fellow-men into misery such as this!

In view of these facts, 1. *We should not entrust ourselves to the first guide who offers himself to us.* Let us examine the credentials of those who ask us to trust ourselves to their care (Matt. xxiv. 24; 1 John iv. 1–3; Isa. viii. 20). 2. *In weighing the claims of men to be our leaders, we should have regard supremely to their moral qualifications.* Their intellectual competency is, of course, not to be disregarded, but moral character is infinitely more important. Not all good men are fitted to be leaders; but no bad man can safely be followed by others. He is continually apt to be guided by policy, rather than principle, and policy leads to perdition (β). Policy is at the best but guess-work—steering by the current: the man who is governed by principle steers by the stars, and neither can be long misled, nor will he wilfully mislead others. *Practical Application.*—Never vote for any candidate for a public office, however clever he may be, if his integrity is doubtful. 3. *Every man needs guidance more close and intimate than any of his fellow-men can afford him:* he needs to be led even in choosing his leaders. Whither shall he look for this guidance? To his reason, his conscience? These guides themselves need instruction (γ): in the absence of it, they have led millions to perdition. We need supernatural and sure guidance, and we have it (1) in God's Word, and (2) in God's Spirit (Prov. iii. 5, 6). The man who follows these guides will be led always in the paths of righteousness and peace.

(α) The marginal reading, "they which call thee happy" (Mal. iii. 12, 15), represents vividly the method adopted by the false prophets; who, instead of warning the people against the dangers of prosperity, were ever felicitating them upon it, saying, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace." But the textual rendering appears to be the preferable one.—*Kay.*

(β) Men know where they are going when they follow a principle; because principles are rays of light. If you trace a ray of light in all its reflections, you will find that it runs back to the central sun; and every great line of honesty, every great line of honour, runs back towards the centre of God. And the man that follows these things knows that he is steering right Godward. But the man that follows policies, and worldly maxims, does not know where he is steering, except that in general he is steering toward the devil.—*Beecher.*

(γ) Reason is God's candle in man. But, as a candle must first be lighted, ere it will enlighten, so reason must be illuminated by Divine grace, ere it can savingly discern spiritual things.—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

Conscience, as an expression of the law or will and mind of God, is not now to be implicitly depended on. It is not infallible. What was true to its office in Eden, has been deranged and shattered by the fall; and now lies, as I have seen a sun-dial in the neglected garden of an old, desolate ruin, thrown down from its pedestal, prostrate on the ground, and

covered by tall, rank weeds. So far from being since that fatal event an infallible directory of duty, conscience has often lent its sanction to the grossest errors, and prompted to the greatest crimes. Did not Saul of Tarsus, for instance, hale men and women to prison; compel them to blaspheme; and imbrue his hands in saintly blood, while conscience approved the deed—he judging the while that he did God service? What wild and profane imaginations has it accepted as the oracles of God? and as if fiends had taken possession of a God-deserted shrine, have not the foulest crimes, as well as the most shocking cruelties, been perpetrated in its name? Read the Book of Martyrs, read the sufferings of our forefathers; and, under the cowl of a shaven monk, or the trappings of a haughty Churchman, you shall see conscience persecuting the saints of God, and dragging even tender women and children to the bloody scaffold or the burning stake. With eyes swimming in tears, or flashing fire, we close the painful record, to apply to Conscience the words addressed to Liberty by the French heroine, when, passing its statue, she rose in the cart that bore her to the guillotine, and throwing up her arms, exclaimed, "O Liberty, what crimes have been done in thy name!" And what crimes in thine, O Conscience! deeds from which even humanity shrinks; against which religion lifts her loudest protest: and which furnish the best explanation of these awful words, "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

So far as doctrines and duties are concerned, not conscience, but the revealed Word of God, is our one, only sure and safe directory.—*Guthrie.*

Oppression of the Poor.

iii. 15. *What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts.*

That infidelity should progress among the labouring classes is one of the most surprising and unreasonable things imaginable. For there is no book so emphatically on the side of the poor as is the Bible. Were the Bible obeyed, the miseries of the poor would vanish. The truth, however, is, that the Bible has suffered from its professed friends. The upper classes who have patronised it have not put its precepts into practice, and the victims of their greed and oppression have foolishly accepted their conduct as an exposition of the teaching of the book which they have professed to venerate. Hence the wrongs which the poor have suffered have prepared them to listen to the blasphemies and to accept the sophisms of infidel lecturers. The employer of labour who oppresses his men during the six days of the week, and goes to church twice on the Sunday, is more dangerous to society than a score of Tom Paines or Bradlaughs. Hence also it is the duty of God's "prophets" in all ages to confront such men with the question of our text.

I. **Oppression of the poor is one of the most common of all sins.** It has been practised in all ages, in all countries, by all classes, in most varied forms. "Poor" is a relative term. Masters have oppressed their servants, debtors their creditors, officers their soldiers, kings their subjects, people their pastors. The oppression has often been so terrible that the oppressed have sought refuge in suicide.

> "Man's cruelty to man
> Makes countless thousands mourn."

II. **Oppression of the poor is one of the most hateful of all sins.** 1. *It is a misuse of strength.* Strength is given to men that they may be helpful to each other; but the oppressor uses his strength as if he were a tiger or a wolf; as if he were a wrecker who drowns the shipwrecked mariner whom he ought to rescue. 2. *It is a cowardly and shameful advantage that is taken of human weakness.* To lead a blind man into a quagmire or over a precipice would be thought a shameful act, even by the most degraded villains. But in what respect would it differ in principle from oppression of the poor? The weak and needy, by reason of their feebleness and poverty, have a claim upon our pity and help; to oppress them is to outrage the primary laws of conscience. Yet how often it is done!

III. **Oppression of the poor is among those sins which are certain to be most terribly punished.** The oppressor proceeds on the idea, that the man

whom he oppresses has no friends to succour and avenge him. What a mistake! All the oppressed have a friend and avenger in GOD. Shall oppression go unrequited? Nay, verily! For, 1. It is an offence against God's *laws*. He has distinctly commanded us to *love* our neighbour as ourselves, and how manifold are the applications of this great commandment! 2. It is an offence against God's *feelings*. In a peculiar manner His sensibilities are outraged when His children act cruelly towards each other. Oppression of the poor kindles within Him mingled disgust and indignation. (*a*)

APPLICATION. 1. *A due consideration of our text would deter men from the sin here denounced.* The question which God now addresses to oppressors He will, with a slight difference, put to them again — when they shall be gathered at His bar! "What *meant* ye that ye did beat my people to pieces, and did grind the faces of the poor?" Bethink you, O ye oppressors, what will ye answer then? Will it be, "Lord, we thought Thou wert too great to take any notice of what men did on earth"? or, "Lord, we oppressed them because they were weak, and we saw we could make a good profit out of their defencelessness"? Do these excuses seem to you too flimsy to be seriously suggested? Consider, then, what more valid vindication will be at your command in that day. In that day you will stand "speechless!" 2. *A remembrance of the prevalence of the crime denounced in our text will give soundness and vigour to our theology.* The demand of our day is for "a God all mercy." Men are endeavouring to cover up hell with the rose-leaves of a spurious benevolence. But a remembrance of the wrongs that are done upon earth, the frightful cruelties that are every day perpetrated, will convince us that hell is a moral necessity. "A God all mercy" would be not only "a God unkind," but a God unjust, a God worthy only of the pity and contempt of his creatures. 3. *A due consideration of the manner in which God intervenes on behalf of the wronged and defenceless, will inspire all noble minds with veneration and admiration for His character.* Jehovah is no Brahma, throned in eternal calm, and indifferent to the sins and sufferings of mankind; He is a Father, prompt to feel and to avenge the wrongs of His children. Let us resolve to be like Him. Let us not only avoid oppression in all its forms; let us be swift to sympathise with and to succour the oppressed.

(*a*) These things are done before God, who looks upon every part of the human family as His own. How should you feel if you were to enter the room where your child is sleeping, and find upon it a stealthy cat, stationed at the portal of life, and stopping its very breath? How should you feel were you to find upon your child a vampire that had fastened into its flesh his blood-sucking bill, and was fast consuming its vitality? How do you feel when one of your children tramples upon another? or when your neighbour's children crush yours? or when ruffian violence strikes against those whose hearts for ever carry the core of your heart?

Judge from your own feelings how God, with His infinite sensibility, must feel when He sees men rising up against their fellowmen; performing gross deeds of cruelty on every hand, waging wars that cause blood to flow throughout the globe; when, in short, He sees them devastating society by every infernal mischief that their ingenuity can invent.—*Beecher.*

What shall become of the oppressor? No creature in heaven or earth shall testify his innocency. But the sighs, cries, and groans of undone parents, of beggared widows and orphans, shall witness the contrary. All his money, like hempseed, is sowed with curses; and every obligation is written on earth with ink and blood, and in hell with blood and fire.—*Adams*, 1653.

THE PLEADER AND THE JUDGE.

iii. 13–15. *The Lord standeth up to plead, &c.*

I. THE PLEADER WHO HERE PRESENTS HIMSELF. Note 1. His majesty. The ancient idea of an advocate was that of a venerable person who would be heard for his own sake, and who would therefore be able to secure for

the cause of his clients an attention that would not otherwise be accorded to it. The ideal of a pleader was that of a person noble in birth and blameless in character. To a considerable extent this ideal has been preserved in our English courts of law. A barrister must be a gentleman (at least in this sense, that he has never earned his bread by manual labour), and of good repute as a man of honour. Certain barristers have established such a reputation, not only for ability and learning, but also for character, and are always listened to with respect; happy therefore is the suitor who is able to secure their advocacy. But this Pleader—how august and venerable is He! How infatuated are those who do not stand prepared to listen carefully and respectfully to whatever He may advance! 2. His benevolence. The ancient idea of a pleader was again that of a person who undertook to advocate the cause of another out of a sense of justice and compassion. Advocacy was esteemed too sacred a thing to be purchased with money. In the course of time the practice sprang up of rewarding the exertions of an advocate by an *honorarium;* but the distinction that still exists between a barrister and an attorney, shows us what the ancient idea of the advocate was. In God this idea is perfectly fulfilled. Without fee or reward, out of pure compassion and justice, He has become "counsel" for the poor and oppressed. Of this fact there is abundant evidence in Scripture, and surely it should kindle within us admiration and love. We justly venerate Howard, Clarkson, Wilberforce—shall we not still more greatly honour God, who stoops to regard them that are of low degree, and becomes the advocate of those who have no other friend? 3. His earnestness. The advocate is supposed to make the cause of his client for the time being his own. Often the supposition is realised in a remarkable degree. But in God it is perfectly realised. The oppressed for whom He pleads He speaks of, not merely as "*these* people," but as "*my* people." In all their afflictions He is afflicted. However frequently men may forget it, He remembers that He is the Father of all mankind, and the wrongs of His children He feels to be His wrongs: the feebler they are, the less able they are to defend themselves, the more do their wrongs wound Him, and provoke Him to anger—*This* is the Advocate who stands up to plead for the oppressed. Will the oppressors be so infatuated as to turn a deaf ear to His pleading? Let those who are tempted to do so pause, and consider

II. THAT HE WHO NOW PLEADS BEFORE THEM WILL BE THEIR JUDGE. An astonishing reversal of circumstances is about to take place: the Advocate is about to ascend the judicial bench, and those before whom He pleads are to stand at His bar. He has announced beforehand the principles upon which then He will proceed. 1. He will have no regard to rank. He will "enter into judgment with the ancients and princes." In many countries, great criminals have been able to defy the judge; but none shall be able to defy this Judge (α) 2. He will pronounce mere indifference to want and suffering a crime (Matt. xxv. 42–45). 3. Those who have inflicted suffering He will judge upon the strict rule of retribution, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (James ii. 13).

By these truths let us be guided in our use of whatever power over others that may have been entrusted to us. Let us hear God proclaiming that the poor are *His* people, and let us so comport ourselves towards them, that in the end we may come to know the fulness of the meaning of the Master's declaration, that "*blessed* are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

(α) Justice, when equal scales she holds, is blind,
Nor cruelty nor mercy change her mind.
When some escape for that which others die,
Mercy to those, to these is cruelty:
A fine and slender net the spider weaves:
Which little and slight animals receives;
And if she catch a summer bee or fly,
They with a piteous groan and murmur die;

But if a wasp or hornet she entrap,
They tear her cords, like Sampson, and escape;
So, like a fly, the poor offender dies;
But like the wasp, the rich escapes and flies.
—*Sir John Denham.*

In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above:
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In its nature; and we ourselves compell'd,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence.
—*Shakespeare.*

HAUGHTINESS.

iii. 16, 17. *Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, . . . therefore the Lord will smite.*

A terrible doom is here denounced against the Jewish women, not because they were vicious, but because they were haughty. Haughtiness is found also in men, though in them its manifestations are somewhat different. It is therefore a question of universal interest. In what respects is haughtiness sinful?

I. The sinfulness of haughtiness is manifest in view of what it is. Webster defines it as "pride mingled with some degree of contempt for others; arrogance." It is a compound iniquity, and as such is doubly offensive. In the chemical world two deadly ingredients may neutralise each other's noxious qualities, and form a harmless and useful article: *e.g.*, water, a compound of hydrogen and oxygen; common salt, a compound of chlorine and sodium. But it is never so in the moral world: combinations of iniquities are always especially offensive. How then must God look upon haughtiness, which is made up of two sins most emphatically denounced in His Word!

II. The sinfulness of haughtiness is manifest in view of its sources. Clearly it springs—1. *From a forgetfulness of our dependence upon God.* Of what is it that we are so proud that we cannot conceal our pride? It is of gifts which we have received from God (1 Cor. iv. 7), and for the continued possession of which we are absolutely dependent on His will. Some are haughty because of what they *are*—beautiful, talented, &c.; others because of what they *have*—rank, money, &c.; others because of what they *have done*—on the field of battle, in art, literature, &c. But personal excellences, amplitude of possessions, or great success, should produce in us not self-exaltation, but gratitude to God. To be ungrateful is to be base; and as haughtiness is one of the flowers that spring from ingratitude, that evil root which has for its seed forgetfulness of our dependence upon God, it is base and hateful too. 2. *From a forgetfulness of the purposes for which God has so richly endowed us.* God endows and helps men, not for their own gratification, but that they may more effectually help others. This great law runs through the whole universe. The sun is filled with light, in order that it may be a light; the violet with perfume, in order that it may diffuse its perfume. So is it with ourselves. In proportion to our gifts we are stewards for God, and were intended to be channels of blessing: great gifts, therefore, should not cause us to swell with foolish arrogance, but should weigh us down with a solemn sense of our responsibility. 3. *From a forgetfulness of our relation to our fellow-men.* God is our Father, and all men are our brethren, but we forget this, and so we behave ourselves towards many as if they were made of an inferior clay. In a household, the children who have sight look not with scorn, but with compassion on a sister who is blind; and if we remembered that all men are our brethren, our perception of their shortcomings as compared with ourselves would excite, not our pride, but our pity.

III. The sinfulness of haughtiness is manifest in view of its emphatic discord with the example of Christ. Every sin may be condemned on this ground, yet haughtiness is in an especial

manner in flagrant contradiction to that embodiment and manifestation of excellence which we have in the character of our Lord. In His dealings with men, even the lowest and most degraded, who can detect one trace of arrogance? Notice especially, that while He never called attention to His temperance, His truthfulness, His prayerfulness, &c., He did point out meekness as the feature by which He was especially distinguished, and by which His followers were to resemble Him, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, *for I am meek and lowly in heart.*"

1. We may see now why haughtiness, which we are so accustomed to treat as a trivial thing, is so emphatically condemned in God's Word. 2. A very moderate acquaintance with human life is enough to teach us that haughtiness is a prolific source of sorrow, as well as a sin. It is so in those *towards* whom it is manifested; slights are resented as insults, and brooded over as bitter wrongs. It is so in those *by* whom it is manifested: the haughty meet with repeated mortifications, arising from the rejection of their claims to superiority (*a*), and they are frequently brought into perilous collision with persons of like temper. An intelligent self-interest would lead us to shun that which God denounces as a sin. 3. While haughtiness may be natural in the children of this world, it is a grave and alarming inconsistency in the professed followers of Jesus.

(*a*) A proud man layeth himself open to blows by his presumption, and, like bubbles of soap-water, the bigger he grows the weaker he is, and swells till he bursts.—*Dumoulin.*

Female Pride and Luxury.

iii. 16, iv. 1. *Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, &c.*

We have here a terrible denunciation of female pride and luxury. Consider—

I. Its Commonness. In almost every age and country there have been women such as are here described.

II. Its Causes. There must be powerful causes to produce such a wide-spread effect. Like all things that are wrong, these evil things—the pride and luxury of so many women—are due to perversions of things that are right,—mainly, to certain things which are among the *differentia* of the female sex, such as—1. A keener love of beauty than is common among men. The love of many women for soft textures and bright colours is as innocent, and free from all trace of personal vanity, as is the love of children for flowers. 2. A stronger yearning for admiration than is common among men. There are vain men, always on the outlook for indications of admiration, and they are simply contemptible. But it is an instinct of the true woman-nature to desire to be loved, and to value highly all things that tend to win love. 3. A recognition of the gifts of personal beauty. As a rule, women have more to be proud of in this respect than have men. If a woman is fair, she is simply a hypocrite if she pretends not to know it. Then there come in, 4. Rivalry, which in itself is a right thing, but becomes a harmful thing when women set themselves to out-dress each other. 5. Timidity, one of the graces of the female character, but that often leads to great evils. Few men have the courage to be singular, and fewer women sufficient self-reliance not to follow the fashion. But the pride and luxury of women is largely due also to the folly of men:—(1.) Most men esteem and reward clothes more than character. Men are taken by such things as are mentioned in our text, and the fisher is not much to be blamed for adapting the bait to the taste of the fish. (2.) Even of those men who condemn female luxury in the abstract, few have the courage to banish it from their own homes. (3.) The lips of many men are sealed on this question by their own

vices. They have *their* indulgences, and one of the prices which they pay for peace in their pursuit is silence as to this indulgence on the part of their wives and daughters. There is an unexpressed but wicked compromise on this matter.

III. Its Consequences. 1. The intellectual degradation of woman, the concentration of nearly all her thoughts on the question of dress. 2. The moral debasement of many women. For the means of gratifying their craving for luxury and display, how many have sold their virtue! 3. The destruction of that female influence which should always be exerted, and when exerted, is so powerful in aid of moral nobility. Sensual grossness in men is at once a cause and consequence of licentious vanity in women. 4. Commercial frauds, to which men resort to provide the means for the maintenance of the luxury of their homes.

Men and women are thus partakers in this sin, and as such, in the days of visitation, they shall suffer together (ver. 17, 25; iv. 1) (*a*).

(*a*) iv. 1. The Jewess, like the ancient Roman, or modern Englishwoman, was called by her husband's name; and she prized the honour of wedlock, and dreaded the reproach of childlessness, at least as much as either of these; but we must contrast the dignified expression of these feelings by Sarah, Hannah, and Elizabeth, nay, even that of the jealous and petulant Rachel, with the exhibition which the prophet now contemplates in his mind's eye, in order to see the picture of social disorganisation which he sees. If a harem of wives and concubines was still a part of the king's state in Isaiah's time, though we have no proof of this, it is quite improbable that polygamy was the common custom of the nation, or that they had not long passed out of the half-civilised condition and habits for which Moses had provided in his laws for the protection of the female slaves whom a man might take at the same time for his wives; but now Isaiah says that these women, whose luxury and pride he has just described, will abandon even the natural reserve of their sex, and not only force themselves several upon one man, but declare that they will be content to share with each other a legalised concubinage in which they will not claim the concubine's ancient right of bread and apparel, which the old law (Exod. xxi. 10) had in express terms secured to her, if only they may bear his name. It need not be supposed that Isaiah anticipated the literal fulfilment of his words; we shall probably understand him better by taking this as an instance of that poetic or rhetorical hyperbole, which he so delights to use for the more forcible expression of his moral and political teaching. The mystery which some commentators have seen in the numbers "seven" and "one" in this passage, and which is even said to have occasioned the separation of this portion of the prophecy into a distinct chapter, perhaps makes worth while the obvious remark that it is nothing more than the wide-spread idiom of modern as well as ancient languages, by which a definite or round number is put for an indefinite. Seven is thus generally used by the Hebrews for any considerable number, as it was among the Egyptians and Persians, and is still said to be in the East. The Moguls are said to employ nine in like manner. So, in English, we put five or ten for any small, and a hundred for a large number, in conversation; though the genius of our language forbids such idioms in graver discourse.—*Strachey*, pp. 55, 56.

The Desolating and Disorganising Power of War.

iv. 1. *And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel, only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach* (*a*).

This verse gives us a vivid picture of the desolating and disorganising power of war. The 25th and 26th verses of the previous chapter say "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn, and she being desolate shall sit on the ground." This righteous chastisement has come. So often have the men been called into the field, so exterminating has been the carnage, as that now few men remain. The natural proportion of the sexes is disturbed. This disorganisation invades woman's nature. Her natural modesty departs. With violent importunity seven women press marriage on one man. They will be no expense to him; they will earn their own food and raiment, if he will only give them his name in marriage. The writer of this outline has recently travelled in a land [Mexico] whose revolutions during the last fifty years have been so fre-

quent as that he found parts of the country where the prophet's words are true to-day. The men have been killed in battle. In some districts there are seven women to one man.

I. The tendency of sin is to produce war and to degrade women. The apostle James has described the genesis of war (iv. 1). Nations are but the aggregate of individuals. If the lusts of selfishness, greed, malice, &c., nestle like vipers in the hearts of individual men, they will be manifest in the nation. 1. *Sin deteriorates man's intellectual faculties.* In its present unpurified condition, the human intellect is not inventive enough to discover those commercial relationships which will eventually bind in bonds of amity the nations of the world together. 2. *Sin intensifies human selfishness.* One of the most desolating wars of modern times originated in that gross selfishness which was too blind to see that it was a sin to hold property in man. 3. *Sin intensifies human greed.* "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark," is a despised threat. Again and again has war originated in greed of territory and lust of plunder. 4. *Sin intensifies human ambition.* In the heart of all great conquerors, from Nimrod to Napoleon, has lain the lust of unholy ambition. Their motto has ever been "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven." 5. Side by side with these lusts of selfishness, greed, ambition, &c., there has *been a lack of justice and mercy.* No mind having these latter sentiments healthily developed could "cry havock and let slip the dogs of war." When the leaders of nations learn "to do justly and love mercy," wars will be less common. 6. *With war have come numerous evils to woman.* The text describes some of them. Others come to the surface every day. Her husband has been torced from her side, or her sons have died on the battlefield; very bitter have been woman's sorrows,—"Yea, a sword hath pierced through her own soul also." And always where soldiers are multiplied in a land, and taken away from useful employment, women have been polluted and degraded. War and womanly degradation are inseparable evils.

II. It is the tendency of Christianity to produce peace and elevate woman. 1. *To produce peace in its loftiest and widest sense Christ came into the world.* The prophet Isaiah predicted Him as the Prince of Peace (ix. 6). At His birth angels sang, "Peace on earth, good-will to man" (Luke ii. 14). 2. *By His atoning work He has laid the foundation of peace between man and God,* and consequently between man and man. 3. *The direct influence of Christ's religion is to restrain and destroy those evil propensities out of which wars originate—lust of greed, ambition, malice,* &c. What is in the individual comes out in the community. As individuals and nations become truly Christian and form the majority, wars will cease. 4. *Prophecy speaks of a time coming when the principles of Christianity shall be in the ascendant,* and then men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, &c., &c. (chap. ii. 4). 5. *As the gospel of peace advances in a land woman's condition is always elevated.* The Christian man honours woman as no other man does. As he grows into the stature of Christ, woman's lot is always happier. Compare woman's status in pagan, Mohammedan, and barbarous lands, with her status in Christendom.

III. Hence while the Gospel claims as its advocate every Christian man, it has special claims on the service of every pious woman.—Every good man is called upon to spread the blessings of Christianity as widely as possible. But there are some evils whose removal appeals specially to pious women. Every good woman should throw her influence into the aggregate of the peace spirit, as against that war spirit which in certain stages of civilisation seems so natural to man. All women should join together to make up an army of peace promoters, outnumbering the men of the sword. To relieve their sisters from sorrow and save them from degradation, should be the aim of all good women.—*William Parker.*

(a) See note to preceding outline.

The Divine Ideal of Israel Realised.

iv. 2–6. *In that day shall the Branch of the Lord, &c.*

"That day" is the glorious period described in ch. ii. 1–4, and those verses and our text should be read together, as the beginning and conclusion of one prophecy. At the beginning, the prophet fixes his gaze upon the sun-illumined peaks of holiness and blessing in the far future, and his spirit rises within him in exultant gladness (ii. 5); and then he begins to survey the spaces of time that lie between. Immediately at his feet he sees almost the whole nation given over to utter ungodliness, the men and the women vying with each other in their pride and luxuriousness, and in their contempt and oppression of the poor; and then he beholds the clouds of Divine vengeance gathering and bursting over the stout-hearted sinners; he sees the nation spoiled of the men who had constituted its strength, and the enfeebled people utterly desolated by war. All is blackness and darkness. But he lifts his eyes again, and there still shines before him the true Zion, dwelling in inviolable peace beneath the manifestations of the presence of her God. This was the vision which was granted him, and which he recorded for the instruction of men in all after-time.

Confining our attention to the closing section of it, we are instructed—**I. That underneath all God's purposes of judgment He has designs of mercy.** In certain portions of this great prophecy God comes forth in terrible majesty, and were we to have regard to them only we should be moved to pray that He would not speak to us any more (Exod. xx. 19). But these judgments that cause us to tremble—what is their purpose? Not merely the infliction of righteous vengeance, but also and more that a way may be opened for manifestations of the Divine goodness. If into Zion He sends "the spirit of judgment and burning," it is that by the purging away of her filth and blood-guiltiness she may be made meet to be the dwelling-place of God. **II. That God resolved to carry out His purposes of mercy by a suitable agent.** He is here designated by a twofold description, the parts of which appear to be contradictory. He is at once "the Branch of the Lord" and "the Fruit of the earth." The significance of the first of these titles becomes more plain as we trace it in prophecy (Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12). So that "the Branch of the Lord" is a man, the son of David, that son concerning whom he sang in the Seventy-second Psalm, the Messiah—our Lord Jesus Christ! As soon as we arrive at this great truth, we perceive what is the explanation of the mysterious contradiction in the two parts of the title of the great Deliverer whom God was about to raise up for Zion (1 Tim. iii. 16; Rom. i. 3, 4). **III. That in the day when God's designs of mercy are fulfilled, the suitability and glory of the Agent whom God resolved to employ will be universally recognised.** We know how He was treated when He came forth on His great mission: He was despised and rejected of men. Yet not long after He had been put to the most ignominious of deaths, an apostle could write, "Unto you that believe He is precious." So even on earth there was a commencement of the fulfilment of the prediction that He should be "beautiful and glorious . . . excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel." We have been permitted also to see how He is regarded by the ransomed ones who have entered into the rest in which they await the manifestation of the sons of God (Rev. v. 6–14). By this disclosure we are enabled to form some conceptions of the manner in which this portion of the prophecy will be fulfilled "in that day" when upon the new earth "the holy city, New Jerusalem," has come down from God out of heaven. **IV. That God's great design both in the infliction of His judgments and**

the operation of His mercy is the creation of universal holiness. The work entrusted to the Messiah was to "wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and to purge the blood-guiltiness of Jerusalem from the midst thereof." There were some "written down for life in Jerusalem" (Acts xiii. 48),—doubtless those whom God foresaw would tremble at His threatenings and accept His gracious offers of mercy; and these the Messiah was so to purify that they should be worthy to "be called holy." Thus one part of GOD'S IDEAL CONCERNING ISRAEL (Exod. xix. 6) was to be realised. It was for the accomplishment of this great purpose that Christ died (Eph. v. 25–27). It was for this end that He was exalted to God's right hand (Acts v. 31). It is for the accomplishment of this great purpose that He now sometimes subjects His people to painful discipline (Heb. xii. 10) (*a*). **V. That the day of universal holiness will be a day of universal blessing.** This great truth is set forth by symbols which would appeal most powerfully to the imagination and the hopes of the godly among Isaiah's contemporaries (ver. 5, 6). That which had been the distinguishing glory of the Tabernacle was to become the common glory of every dwelling in the New Jerusalem. Moreover, the whole city was to be a covering—a canopy such as in a Jewish wedding was held over the bride and bridegroom; the symbol of God's protecting love. Beneath it, as in a tabernacle, they should dwell securely. Thus the second portion of God's ideal concerning Israel was to be realised (Deut. xxviii. 9, 10; xxxiii. 28). First purity, then peace; perfect purity, perfect peace. A little later Isaiah had another vision concerning this tabernacle (xxxii. 2). God's protecting love for His people is embodied in our Lord Jesus Christ; "in *Him* all the promises of God are Yea and Amen."

(*a*) As God makes use of all the seasons of the year for the harvest, the frost of winter as well as the heat of summer, so doth He of fair and foul, pleasing and unpleasing providences for promoting holiness. Winter providences kill the weeds of lusts, and summer providences ripen and mellow the fruits of righteousness. When He afflicts it is for our profit, to make us partakers of His holiness (Heb. xii. 10). Bernard compares afflictions to the teasel, which though it be sharp and scratching, is to make the cloth more pure and fine. God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well that He would rather see a hole than a spot in His child's garments. When He deals more gently in His providences, and lets His people sit under the sunny bank of comforts and enjoyments, fencing them from the cold blasts of affliction, it is to draw forth the sap of grace, and hasten their growth in holiness.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

GOD'S PERPETUAL PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE.

iv. 2–5. *In that day shall the Branch of the Lord, &c.*

The contrast between the preceding chapter, in which denunciations fall upon the ear like thunder, and the sunny promises of this. The references to Zion both in the Psalms and in the Prophecies are frequent and striking. Originally crowned by the Jebusite citadel, it was besieged and taken by David, who transferred his court from Hebron thither; he afterwards erected a tabernacle upon its height, and it there became the chosen resting-place of the ark of the Lord. Hence, in Scripture language, it came sometimes to denote the entire city of Jerusalem, and sometimes the Church or commonwealth of the faithful, which the Highest has promised to establish, and out of which God, the perfection of beauty, shines. You will have no difficulty in thus understanding the reference in the words before us. Applied to the ancient Zion, or even to the entire city of Jerusalem, the words are extravagant and unmeaning; applied to the Church of God—His living, spiritual temple—they are sober, comforting truths. Consider

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE PROMISE—(2–4). Two things are presented as antecedent to the gifts of blessing—the coming of the Divine Saviour, and

His discipline for holiness within His Church. 1. **The coming of the Divine Saviour** (ver. 2). The transition from the gloomy judgment to the grandeur of deliverance is abrupt and striking, as if from a savage wilderness one were to emerge suddenly into green pastures and among gay flowers. So great a change passes upon human destinies when Christ the Lord comes down. We are naturally heirs of judgment. But a Saviour has been provided—a Saviour who, in the mysterious union of natures, combines perfection of sympathy and almightiness of power. Without Christ, we are hopeless and lost. Give us Christ, and we are heirs to all the fulness of God. 2. **The Saviour's discipline for holiness within His Church** (ver. 3, 4). With God the great thing is holiness. To work this holiness in His people, God subjects them to discipline, and, if necessary, to the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning. There are some stains so deep that the fire must purge them. The constant superintendence over human affairs which these words imply is assured to us by the experience of our own witnessing hearts, which corroborate the declarations of the inspired Word. In this superintendence the Christian will rejoice. In his anxiety to be conformed to the whole image of God, he will not be careful or delicate about the means God may use. Here is a test by which to try yourselves. Are you willing to submit to this preparation for the promise? Do not shrink from the hissing brand; it will only burn away the core of the ulcer.

II. The Promise Itself (ver. 5). As we read these words, we go back to former ages and a fierce wilderness, where a pilgrim host marches, and there, now in their van for guidance, now in their rear for protection, rises a pillar of cloud by day, and by night a pillar of flame. This was the vision prominent in the prophet's mind, when he symbolised by it God's presence and protection to His chosen Church. We are the heirs of the glorious things thus spoken of the city of God. There is the presence of God with His Church—that is the central thought; then there are right-hand and left-hand thoughts or aspects in which that presence manifests itself, radiating itself on the one hand for counsel, and on the other hand for defence. 1. The central thought, **The presence of God.** It was in cloud and in fire that God specially revealed Himself to His people in days of old (Gen. xv. 17; Exod. xix. 18, xxxiii. 9; 1 Kings viii. 10; Hab. iii. 3–5). So long as the cloud and fire were in the camp, so long the wilderness lost half its terror, because the Israelites knew that God was in the midst of them for good. That God is still present in His Church is no impious fanatic's dream. To be sure He does not come as He did in former times, bewildering the sight and overawing the mind. The dispensations are different. The Divine manifestations of terror which made even Moses fear and quake, would not suit this later and better dispensation of love. Yet our tabernacles are not merely places of human assembly; they are tabernacles of God's presence, and our worship ascends not to a remote or absent God. 2. The right-hand thought, **The presence of God for counsel.** You remember that this was the primary purpose for which the pillar of cloud and fire was given. Consider how much it was needed by the Israelites in the trackless wilderness. (1.) For guidance in their perplexities, God's presence is promised to the churches of to-day. Nobody can look upon the history of the Church with eyes that are not blinded by infidel films without discovering traces of a presence and counsel higher than that of the mightiest and wisest men. What chance had she at the beginning but in the support and upholding that was itself Divine! Through what perils she has been safely guided since! (2.) If I were to come nearer home, if I were to ask you to look not at the history of the Church, but at your own history, is there not something that would cause you to respond with a joy not less deep and solemn, as you think how the Lord

through all your wanderings has been a guide and counsel for you? 3. The left-hand thought, **The presence of God for defence.** You know what the pillar of fire was—to the Israelites a lamp, brilliant, exquisite, and heartening; to the Egyptians that followed, a consuming fire. There is defence as well as counsel for the Church to-day. Expositors have differed a little about the reading of the last clause in this verse. Some tell us it ought to read, "upon all the *glory* shall be a defence;" that is, there shall be protection round about the glory which is created by this luminous cloud and by this kindled fire. Some tell us it should be read, "upon *all* the glory shall be a defence;" that is, the luminous cloud and the brilliant fire shall be itself the defence of the Church. What does it matter which way we take it? The defence is sure, the salvation of the Lord is for bulwarks equally in the one case as in the other; and so the Church is safe, whatever betide. Powerful adversaries have banded themselves for her destruction, and yet she still lives, while their names are forgotten, or remembered with accusation and shame. Let us, then, not be afraid of future assaults (Num. xxiii. 23). The defence is not merely for Zion as a whole, but for every dwelling-place therein. Every believer has a pillar of cloud and fire over his own homestead, visible not to your eyes, but to those of the angels. There cannot be a cloud upon "the assembly" unless there are first clouds upon the dwelling-places. Consecrated homes furnish consecrated congregations; consecrated houses bring the baptism of fire. Dear brethren, this promise is yours, if you like to have it. It is the simple, quiet soul that sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to His voice, that has all this done for him (Heb. i. 14).

> "Which of the petty kings of earth
> Can boast a guard like ours,
> Encirled from our second birth
> With all the heavenly powers?"
>
> —*W. Morley Punshon, LL.D., Christian World Pulpit*, ii. 372–377.

The Cleansing Spirit.

iv. 4. *By the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning.*

In ch. ii. 1–5, the prophet gives us a vision of the glory which shall distinguish Messianic times. From ver. 6, however, and through that chapter and the next, he depicts scenes of darkness and distress, that were to come upon the Jewish nation in correction of its haughtiness, arrogance, and rebellion. In ch. iv. the light again breaks through these fearful clouds of judgment, and under the glory of the Messianic period we see the beauty and purity of the chastened people of the Lord. The filth of the daughters of Zion has been washed away, the blood of Jerusalem has been purged from the midst thereof. But how? "By the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning." Here we have the source and cause of the change.—This language is very striking and suggestive, *and reveals the Divine procedure in the cleansing of the heart.*

I. The Spirit of Judgment. God's Spirit effects this reformation by a process of discernment and conviction. We observe—1. That a real change of heart is usually preceded by a discovery of its sinful condition. The natural tendency of the depraved heart is to ignore and deny its corrupted state. The light must be let in to show that it *is* depraved (α). 2. That this reformation is preceded by a discovery of the *enormity* as well as the fact of sin. Even a converted sinner tries to palliate or soften the sins that condemn him. Hence men contrive such flimsy distinctions as "white lies" and "black lies." But "the Spirit of judgment" goes to the root of the matter, and discovers sin *as* sin (1 Kings viii. 28). So in the text, it is the *filth* of the daughters of Zion that has had to be washed away; it is the *blood* of Jerusalem that has had to be purged from its midst (β).

II. The Spirit of Burning. From this description of the Holy Ghost, we learn—1. That *the detection of sin is, in*

the Divine purpose, to be followed by its destruction. There can be no *home* for sin in a pure heart, nor will God make any concession to it (Hab. i. 13; Ps. v. 5). 2. *This process is extremely searching and painful.* It is one of "burning" (Matt. iii. 11). How many have quailed under the testing ordeal!—*e.g.*, loss of wealth! loss of friends! personal affliction, &c.

From the subject three general reflections arise:—1. God does not chastise arbitrarily or at random. He does it by "the Spirit of judgment." 2. Neither does He fail in the work by reason of a weak indulgence, which really would be unkindness. He does it by "the Spirit of burning." 3. The object He has in view is to promote and secure our personal holiness, to make us indeed *like Himself* (Heb. xii. 10)—the most blessed result to which discipline can lead us.—*W. Manning.*

(α) It is with the children of men as with the housewife, that having diligently swept her house, and cast the dust out of doors, can see nothing amiss, not so much as a speck of dust in it; whereas if the sun do but a little shine in, through some cranny in the wall or some broken quarry in the window, she may soon see the whole house swim and swarm with innumerable atoms of dust, floating to and fro in the air, which, for dimness of light or sight, she was not able to discern. Even so is it with many that were careful of their ways, so that little may be seen that is amiss; yet when they shall come to look more attentively into God's law, a little beam of light, reflecting upon their souls from it, will discover unto them such an innumerable company, as well of corruptions in their heart as of error and oversight in their lives, that it shall make them, as men amazed, cry out, "Lord, what earthly man doth know the errors of his life?"—*Spencer*, 1658.

(β) As the Lord led Ezekiel from one place to another, and the further he went the greater abominations he discerned (Ezek. viii.), from the door of the court to the door of the gate of the Lord's house, and from thence to the inner court; so the Spirit of the Lord leads the sinner from one part of his house to another, from one room—one faculty of his soul to another, and still discovers greater, more and more abominations,—leads from the profaneness of his ordinary conversation to the sins of his religious duties, from the sins of his life to the sins of his heart, from the streams of sin in his actions to the spring of sin which bubbles up continually in every part of his soul. He brings to mind the sins that he has forgotten, makes him "possess the sins of his youth;" and now the "bag" (Job xiv. 17) is opened, and the sinner sees what he is to reckon for, he cries out as the prophet's servant, "How shall we do?" and as David (Ps. xxxviii. 4). He comes not to the assizes as formerly, to see others tried and condemned; he sees himself now at the bar, himself arraigned and indicted; he cannot but plead guilty. He is clearly cast in law, and bears the sentence of condemnation as though the Lord did by name pronounce sentence of condemnation against him.—*Clarkson*, 1621–1686.

The Parable of the Vineyard.

v. 1–7. *Now will I sing, &c.*

I. The Privileges conferred on the Jewish nation (ver. 2, 3). It would be vain and useless to attempt, as some have done, to find in the privileges of the Jews an exact counterpart to the various items here specified concerning this "vineyard." For example, Jerome regards the fencing of the vineyard as symbolical of the protection of the Jews by the angels; the gathering out of the stones, the removal of the idols; the tower, the temple erected in Jerusalem; the wine-press, the altar (α). To seek thus for minute analogies is at once to destroy the oratorical force and the simplicity of the parable. Rather let us lay hold of its leading truths. The prophet desired to remind the Jews that they had received extraordinary privileges from God; consequently he employed figures calculated to impress his hearers with that truth; and he does not fail to specify every particular which those acquainted with a vineyard would expect, if it were one from which a copious supply of choice fruit might be reasonably expected. 1. *The choice which God made of the Jews as a nation* was the first and fundamental privilege which He conferred upon them. 2. Having chosen them, God revealed Himself to them as clearly as was then possible through the symbolism of *the Mosaic Law.* Through its statutes and ceremonies were shadowed forth the

great truths of His holiness, His mercy, His sanctifying grace, and the Sacrifice which in the fulness of time was to be offered for the sin of the world (Rom. iii. 1, 2). 3. In addition to the Law, God gave to His people the inestimable help of *Prophetical Teaching*, to assist them to understand its meaning, and to stimulate them to keep it with full purpose of heart.

II. The consequent obligations under which the Jews were laid. From the vineyard, for which the great Husbandman had done so much, He naturally looked for fruit. The fruits which the prophet specifies as being required by God from the Jews correspond precisely with their privileges (ver. 7). He had given them a code of laws by which their actions were to be guided, and had impressed upon them the duty of doing to others as they would be done to. Now He looked for the fruits of justice and righteousness. It was a reasonable demand, the lowest that could have been made. Yet even this demand was not met.

III. The Judgment which God designed to bring upon them (ver. 6, 7). As we objected to the attempt to find exact counterparts between the various privileges of the Jews and the labours which had been bestowed upon the vineyard, so we set aside as needless all attempts to discover parallels between the various items of the threatening against the vineyard and the judgments by which the Jews were visited. All that the prophet means to say is this, that the privileges which the Jews enjoyed pre-eminently above all the other nations God would take from them, and they should be reduced to the level of their neighbours. The removal of those privileges was itself the heaviest judgment that could have befallen them.

PRACTICAL LESSON.—*Where there is privilege there is obligation.* 1. You who are Christians are responsible for your privileges. Consider how great they are: a knowledge of the will of God; the example of Christ; a throne of grace ever accessible; the counsel and help of the Holy Spirit. If God looked for the fruits of justice and righteousness from the Jews, what manner of fruit may He reasonably expect from you? 2. Even those of you who are not Christians, but are still living in sin, have privileges: a preached Gospel; the offer of a free, full, and present salvation; the strivings with you of the Holy Ghost. Despise them not, or you will perish. —*Thomas Neave.*

(a) "The house of Israel" (*beth Yisrâel*) was the whole nation, which is also represented in other passages under the same figure of a vineyard (ch. xxvii. 2, *sqq.*; Ps. lxxx., &c). But as Isaiah was prophet in Judah, he applies the figure more particularly to Judah, which was called Jehovah's favourite plantation, inasmuch as it was the seat of the Divine sanctuary and of the Davidic kingdom. This makes it easy enough to interpret the different parts of the simile employed. The fat mountain horn was Canaan, flowing with milk and honey (Exod. xv. 17); the digging of the vineyard, and clearing it of stones, was the clearing of Canaan from its former heathen inhabitants (Ps. xliv. 3); the sorek-vines were the holy priests and prophets and kings of Israel of the earlier and better times (Jer. ii. 21); the defensive and ornamental tower in the midst of the vineyard was Jerusalem as the royal city, with Zion the royal fortress (Micah iv. 8); the winepress-trough was the temple, where, according to Ps. xxxvi. 8, the wine of heavenly pleasures flowed in streams, and from which, according to Ps. xlii. and many other passages, the thirst of the soul might all be quenched. The grazing and treading down are explained in Jer. v. 10 and xii. 10.—*Delitzsch.*

I believe that in a poetical allegory there is always more or less of allusion to the details of that which is allegorised; but it is only allusion,—to be realised by the imagination, rather than by the understanding, of the reader, as well as the poet. The several images are parts of a picture, which must be contemplated as a picture, and its meaning is to enter into the mind through the imagination. Still, a matter-of-fact commentator, like Vitringa, deeply imbued with the spirit of his author, will sometimes greatly help his reader's imagination by his minute analysis; and I think this is the case in his explanation of the details of this description of the vineyard. "*A vineyard*" consists of vines planted for the sake of their fruit: the Hebrew nation with its tribes, its families, and its persons, was such a vineyard, appointed to bring forth the fruits of personal and social religion and virtue,—holiness, righteousness, and love to God and man: this nation was established in a land flowing with milk and honey, endowed with all natural advantages, all circumstances

which could favour inward life by outward prosperity; and the grace and favour of Jehovah, and the influences of His Spirit, always symbolised by oil, were continually causing it to be fruitful. "*And He fenced it,*" —the arm of the LORD of hosts, employing kings and heroes, was its defence against all enemies; its institutions were fitted to preserve internal order, and to prevent the admixture of evil from without, with the chosen and separated nation; and its territory was marked out and protected by natural boundaries in a noticeable manner. "*Gathered out the stones,*" —the heathen nations, and the stocks and stones they worshipped. "*And planted it with the choicest* vine,"—a nation of the noble stock of the patriarchs, and chosen and cultivated by the Lord of the vineyard, with especial care, for His own use. "*And built a tower in it,*"—namely, Jerusalem—for the protection and superintendence of the vineyard, as well as to be its farmhouse, so to speak. "*And also made a wine-press therein,*"—where the wine-press seems to point to the same idea as the sending the servants to receive the fruit, in our Lord's modification of this parable: lawgivers, kings, and judges, the temple with its priesthood and ordinances, and the schools of the prophets, were the appointed means for pressing out and receiving the wine—the spiritual virtues and graces of the vineyard. And the end is, that "*He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*" —*Strachey*, pp. 62, 63.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

v. 1–7. *Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song, &c.*

The points of moral instruction made prominent in this parable are—I. That God's gifts of truth, light as to duty, moral culture, and opportunities for doing good, create peculiar obligations to be morally fruitful, to do justice, and love mercy. II. That men so blessed with privileges will be held to a stern accountability. III. That failing to meet this, they must expect that God will take away their privileges and give them to others who will render the fruits in their season (Matt. xxi. 43). IV. That there is a line beyond which God does not deem it wise to waste His moral efforts upon self-hardened sinners. V. That in His view the exigencies of His moral kingdom demand of Him rather that He make sinners, beyond that line, an example of His righteous displeasure against their awful wickedness, and a warning to other sinners lest they venture too far in abusing His compassionate and long-suffering efforts to reclaim and save them. It is a terrible thing to withstand God in His labours to save the soul. — *Henry Cowles, D.D., Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 30.

GREAT PRIVILEGES.

v. 1–7. *Now will I sing to my well-beloved, &c.*

I. Great privileges are bestowed by God according to the good pleasure of His will. 1. Obviously this is true of the great privileges accorded to the Jewish nation. They were not granted because of anything in them (Deut. vii. 7; ix. 4–6, &c.). There were other "hills" that would have been just as suitable for a vineyard, and just as fruitful, had the great Husbandman been pleased to deal with them in the same manner. 2. If we consider our own religious privileges, we must acknowledge the same great principle: other nations still heathen *deserve* them just as much as we do; and our heathen forefathers to whom they were first granted were in no sense superior to the heathen of to-day. We owe our superiority to our privileges, not our privileges to our superiority. 3. The same principle is as true of temporal as of spiritual privileges. Why are some born clever, and others stupid? some strong and others weak? some rich, and others poor? We can return no other answer than that such is the will of God.—This principle seems to be surrounded by a cloud of mystery; but there are rays of light that relieve it,—to some of them we shall presently refer; and we must be careful not to darken it by our own folly. We must not

imagine, because God acts according to the good pleasure of His will, that therefore He acts arbitrarily, capriciously, out of mere whim and fancy. Though He may not disclose to us the reasons for many of His procedures, we may be sure that He has good reasons. In withholding them from us—possibly because we are as yet incapable of understanding them,—and thus making demands upon our faith, He deals with us just as we frequently deal with our children.

II. **Great privileges involve great responsibilities.** From the vineyard so carefully cultivated choice grapes are justly expected. This is a truth so familiar that it is apt to become to us a mere truism. But we shall do well to look at it steadily,—1. *As a guide to us in our duty.* It is well to pause and consider what privileges God has conferred upon us, that we may be aroused to a perception of the nature and extent of the demands which He is certain to make upon us. In view of our privileges, what ought our life to be? (Luke xii. 48). 2. *As a help to us in our perplexities.* In view of such providential arrangements as have been referred to, these are sometimes very painful. But we must remember that the great principle before us admits of being very variously stated. It is just as true that "small privileges involve small responsibilities." We shall adopt the slander of the wicked and slothful servant, if we think of God as a hard master who seeks to reap where He has not sown. If God has entrusted to any man only one talent,—and He entrusts to every man at least as much as that,—He will not demand from Him the usury upon ten talents, nor upon two.

III. **Great privileges do not necessarily result in great happiness.** They ought to do so; they often do so; but as frequently they fail to do so. Even in temporal things, the happiest men are not always those whose possessions are most various and ample. The most learned men are not always those who own the largest libraries. And the holiest men are not always those whose religious opportunities are most numerous and great. Why is it, that great privileges and great happiness are not always associated? Because man is a voluntary agent, and God will not force happiness upon any man. He may offer us eternal life, but we must "lay hold" of it. He may shed upon our path great light, but we must walk in it (ch. ii. 5).

PRACTICAL LESSON.—Instead of repining because our privileges are not more numerous and great, let us diligently use those which have been granted to us, and so make them what they were intended to be—sources of blessing to us. Enclosed within God's vineyard, and carefully cultured by Him, let us see to it that the grapes we bring forth are not wild grapes.

IV. **Great privileges neglected or misused bring on great condemnations** (ver. 5, 6). Compare also Luke xiii. 6–9. Had that fig-tree been growing on some open common, notwithstanding its barrenness, it might have stood till it decayed, but because it was barren in a "vineyard" the righteous order is given, "Cut it down!" This principle, also, we may turn to practical account. Like a former one, we may use it—1. *To help us in our perplexities.* Sometimes we are in trouble to know what will become of the heathen in the day of judgment. Well, even if they are condemned, they will be condemned less severely than those who have misused greater privileges (Matt. xi. 22; Luke xii. 48). 2. *To stimulate us to a faithful discharge of duty.* Fear is not the highest motive, but it is a very useful one, and no truly wise man will leave it out of account. We need every kind of help to fortify us against temptation, and it is good to remember what will be the result if we yield to it, and so remain barren and unfruitful, or even bring forth "wild grapes" (Heb. iv. 1; 1 Pet. i. 7; Phil. ii. 12).

Fear is useful as a motive, but hope is still more helpful; and in the matter of our salvation we may employ both fear and hope as allies. Reverse the last principle, and read it thus, **Great**

privileges well used secure corresponding rewards. Compare Luke xix. 17. If the choice vine planted in the fruitful vineyard bring forth "good grapes," the Husbandman will pronounce over it rejoicing benedictions (Heb. vi. 7).

Divine Disappointments.

v. 2. *He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

"I believe in God." Which God? The God constructed for us by philosophers, who is impassive, throned in eternal calm, unmoved by the crimes or the virtues of men, all of which He has foreseen from eternal ages, and which cannot in any way affect Him at the time of their occurrence; a God who towers above men, majestic and unchangeable, like an Alpine peak, which is the same whether sunlight cheers or clouds darken the valleys beneath? No, but the God of the Bible, who loves and hates, who rejoices with us in our gladness and sorrows with us in our griefs, who foresees and overrules all, and yet can hope and be disappointed.

I. That God can be disappointed is distinctly the implication of our text. "He *looked* that it," &c. 1. Isaiah's parable recalls the privileges which God had conferred upon the Jews; and we know that He dealt with them as He did, in order that they might become a holy nation (Exod. xix. 6; Deut. vii. 6, xxvi. 18, 19). Was their persistent unholiness no disappointment to Him? 2. The same truth is implied in what we are told of God's feelings in view of the wickedness of the antediluvians (Gen. vi. 5, 6). He had made man in His own image, in order that He might continue therein, and shine with the lustre of His own moral perfections; each man was to be a *planet* in the moral universe, reflecting the glory of the great central Sun; and when He saw man transformed into the image of Satan, and His purposes concerning him frustrated, He was filled with profound regret. 3. The same truth is implied in what we are told concerning Christ. "He came unto His own" (John i. 11). For what purpose? Certainly not that He might be rejected, but that He might be received by them. But He *was* rejected! See how forcibly this is brought out in His parable (Luke xx. 9–15 — especially verse 13). 4. It is implied in Christ's tears and lament over Jerusalem (Luke xix. 41; Matt. xxiii. 37). 5. It is implied in the apostolic declarations, that God is desirous that all men should repent and be saved (1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9). We must not minimise the force of θέλει—ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι. The strength of any one's desire is to be measured by what he will do or sacrifice to accomplish it; and God gave His only begotten Son in order that all men might have everlasting life. But all men are not saved. That the Scriptures teach that God can be—and often is—disappointed, is clear.

II. "But it is impossible that God can be disappointed, seeing that He is omniscient and foresees all things. Surprise, and consequently disappointment, is not possible to perfect knowledge." 1. This objection appears to be very reasonable, but against it there is this fatal objection, that we cannot measure God by our reason (α). We cannot tell how He will act or feel under certain circumstances: all we know is, that under all circumstances God will act and feel in a manner worthy of Himself. But what is, or is not, consistent with His attributes, we are not in a position to determine. Take, for instance, His omnipresence. If we were present when dastardly wrongs and great crimes are committed, and were clothed with power to prevent them, how certain it is that we should prevent them (β)! But every day He stands by and sees such wickednesses perpetrated, and is silent, and gives no sign. Let us, then, not be in a hurry to decide that disappointment is not consistent with omniscience. 2. There is an experience very frequent

among men, which may perhaps help us a little to understand what disappointment is in God. Evils may be long distinctly foreseen—as, for example, the death of a dear friend suffering from an incurable disease—but yet not realised until they actually occur. The blow is foreseen long before it falls, but it is felt when it falls. Every man knows that he must die, and yet how nearly a surprise is death to every man! 3. Whether we can understand it or not, it is our duty to accept this declaration, that in view of the ingratitude and sinfulness of men whom God has blessed and has sought to win to virtue and holiness, He is profoundly grieved and disappointed. Such declarations are not to be dismissed as "anthromorphological." However much that is in them may be figurative, there is a reality behind the figures.

III. Whatever mystery may attach to this declaration, consider how precious it is—1. A God who can be disappointed is precisely the God we need. How else could we be assured of His sympathy with us in the disappointments which so frequently come upon us, and which make up so considerable a part of the experiences of our life? Were God such a being as the philosophers have imagined, we might feel that He understood us, as an anatomist understands exactly how a frog on which he is operating will act when exposed to galvanic shocks, but we could not have had the inexpressible consolation of the assurance of His sympathy. It is only a mother who has been bereaved who can comfort a mother who is weeping over her dead child. 2. A God who is so much interested in us that our failures in virtue inspire Him with profound grief and disappointment, is again precisely the God we need. Of what value to us would be a God who looked upon us with as little emotion as a king may be supposed to do upon the ants who crawl across his path? It is because men do not think of God as He is revealed in our text, that they sin against Him; if they did but realise how He feels about them, it would be impossible for them to transgress as they do. I accept His declaration, that He is disappointed in view of human sin, and I try to measure His disappointment. I find help in this endeavour in this Old Testament parable: how profound would be the disappointment of a husbandman under such circumstances as are supposed! But I find yet more valuable help in the greatest of the New Testament parables. How bitter must have been the disappointment of the father of the Prodigal when he went away into a far country! Such disappointments break the hearts of tens of thousands of fathers and mothers, and brings down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; and precisely such disappointment it is, only vaster, deeper, sadder, that fills the heart of our Heavenly Father when His children go astray. It is thus that some of you have grieved Him; it is thus that some of you are grieving Him to-day by your contemptuous disregard of His offers of mercy and forgiveness. Oh, think what it is that you do, and surely your carelessness must give place to profound contrition, and you will resemble the Prodigal in your penitence, as you have done in your ingratitude and your guilt.

(a) God is to us, and to every creature incomprehensible. If thou couldst fathom or measure Him, and know His greatness by a comprehensive knowledge, He were not God. A creature can comprehend nothing but a creature. You may know God, but not comprehend Him; as your foot treadeth on the earth, but doth not cover all the earth. The sea is not a sea if you can hold it in a spoon. Thou canst not comprehend the sun which thou seest, and by which thou seest all things else, nor the sea, nor the earth, no, nor a worm, nor a blade of grass: thy understanding knoweth not all that God hath put into the least of these; thou art a stranger to thyself, both body and soul. And thinkest thou, that perfectly comprehendest nothing, to comprehend God? Stop then thy over-bold inquiries, and remember that thou art a shallow, finite worm, and God is infinite. First seek to comprehend the heaven and earth and whole creation, before thou think of comprehending Him to whom the whole world is nothing, or vanity.—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(β) During one part of the trip our party was augmented by a redif, or soldier of the reserves, who was going home on leave of absence. He wore the uniform of the Turkish soldier, but I observed that in the evening he threw over his shoulders a woman's robe, made of a soft thin kind of felt, worn by the women in this country, and beautifully embroidered in colours around the neck and bosom. I had the curiosity to inquire into the history of this gown, and could scarcely restrain my indignation at the story I heard. This soldier said he had got the gown at Saitschar. After the discovery of the evacuation of the place by the Servians, he and a party of four or five more entered the town. In one of the houses they found a Servian family that had decided to remain in their house, and throw themselves on the mercy of the Turks. This family consisted of an old man, a married daughter with two children, and a girl of fourteen, whose relationship to the rest of the family they did not take the trouble to inquire into. The husband of the woman, if she had one, was absent. They began by fastening all the doors, so that nobody could escape: then they thoroughly pillaged the house, and took and divided everything of value among themselves. They were in the house a day and a night, for it was a rich one apparently, and it took some time to get everything properly divided and packed; and besides, they were disposed to be merry and make a night of it.

I will not enter into the details of what they did during this night, because there are people who do not apparently object in the least to the commission of these deeds, who object to anybody lifting a finger to prevent them, or even to the expression of any indignation on the subject, but who are dreadfully shocked at the recital of them; and I wish to spare the feelings of these sensitive persons. Suffice it to say that the next morning the question arose as to what should be done with the two women, the two children, and the old man. Some of the party were in favour of letting them go; but the rest were of opinion that it would be amusing to kill them, and a discussion ensued, which lasted more than an hour, in presence of the weeping, trembling victims, who were wildly begging for mercy, and among whom, it should be remembered, there was a mother begging for the lives of her two children. The narrator said that he, with another of the party, had leant to the side of mercy, but that the majority were against them, and that they finally ended the discussion and the prayers of the victims by falling upon them with their sabres. I asked him how he had come by the gown, and he replied that, seeing what the result was going to be, he had stripped it from the girl while the discussion was in progress, before she was killed, so that it might not be blood-stained. He had taken a fancy to it, because it would just be right for his daughter, who was about the same age; and his companions, perceiving this, made him pay rather high for it—fifty piastres. He was a heavy, dull-looking brute, and it seemed strange to think that he had a daughter, a pretty, tender, joyous little thing, perhaps, that would wear this gown with delight. He told the story in a quiet, phlegmatic manner, and spoke very freely, looking upon me as an Englishman, and therefore as a friend.—*Letter in the "Daily News,"* Nov. 15, 1876.

A Sad Canticle.

v. 4–6. *What could have been done more to my vineyard? &c.*

There are certain epochs in the history of the Church when on every hand may be seen the saddest indifference. This state of things is not owing to a suspension of Divine gifts, nor to the absence of earnest pastors, nor to the circumstances by which God's people are surrounded. Everything has been done for the vineyard which the wise and gracious husbandman could perform, yet no fruit is produced. The fault lies with the Church itself. Individual members have relapsed into a state of ease and supineness. Faithful warnings have been unheeded; earnest entreaties have been disregarded; mercies have been unnoticed; chastisements have been profitless. At such a time they who sigh and cry for this desolation, turn to the despised or forgotten Lord, and sing their mournful canticle, "My well-beloved," &c. (ver. 1, 2). Then the Lord replies, "Judge, I pray you," &c. (ver. 3–6). It is too true the sorrowful singer admits, and says, 'He looked for judgment,' &c. (ver. 7).

Let us consider the *similitude* under which the Church is represented, the just *complaint* of the Lord, and the terrible *condemnation* He pronounces.

I. The similitude. A vineyard.

This parable is peculiarly interesting on account of the fact that our Lord Jesus uttered one in many respects similar to it (Matt. xxi. 33). The figure of the vineyard is often used in the Old Testament, generally to represent the Church. The vineyard of the parable is represented as being—1. *In*

a very favourable locality. 2. *Planted with the choicest vine.* 3. *Carefully fenced and diligently cultivated.* 4. *Having the husbandman living in the midst.* "Built a tower." God is His *own* watchman on the walls of Zion.

II. **The Complaint.** "It brought forth wild grapes." Observe the complaint is not based upon the poverty or paucity of the crop, or even upon the absence of a crop altogether, or because of the lateness of the crop. There is an abundant crop; but of what? "wild grapes," *i.e.*, "poisonous berries," like those the servant of Elisha gathered, (2 Kings iv. 39). A crop that could have grown without the husbandman at all. An unnatural production. One calculated to injure, if not to destroy life. The husbandman's design is thwarted; he expected that which would nourish and stimulate life; whereas the opposite is produced. The allegory explains itself. The inconsistencies and follies, the disobedience and idolatry of the Church, are like deadly upas trees in the world; they tend to produce infidelity, *i.e.*, moral death, among men. The mission of the Church is to proclaim life, by God's Spirit to communicate it; instead of that, a worldly and apostate Church leads men to say and believe, "There is no God." This is unnatural; the proper fruit of the Church is holiness, obedience, and zeal.

III. **The Condemnation.** (vers. 5, 6).

1. *Observe the mercy of the condemnation.* "It shall be eaten up." The obnoxious growth shall be destroyed. The pride, the ignorance, the idolatry of the Church shall be removed. God will not abandon her, as He does the world, to fill up her measure of iniquity. He must be glorified in His saints, although not now, yet afterward. The patient husbandman will wait for another year, when his choice vine shall yield choice fruit.

2. *Observe the severity of the condemnation.* Her privileges shall not be enjoyed. "The hedge taken away." Direful persecution shall be experienced. "It shall be trodden down." The Spirit's influence shall be withheld. "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." It is so with the Jews. That vineyard is desolate now;—the vines are trodden under foot; the rain rains not on them, BUT THEY ARE NOT ROOTED UP. God shall plant another hedge, dwell again in the forsaken tower; and His ancient people shall grow and flourish on the fruitful hill; bringing forth such fruit that the husbandman shall rejoice, and earth and heaven be glad. —*Stems and Twigs*, vol. i. pp. 246–249.

On the Advantage of Small Allotments of Land to the Poor.

v. 7, 8. *He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. Woe unto them that join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place.*

I. The Almighty expects from all His creatures, and especially from those to whom He has given wealth or power, the practice of justice and righteousness. II. The Almighty, instead of finding justice and righteousness among His creatures, discovers oppression on the part of the powerful, and a cry of lamentation and of indignation on the part of the poor: the proof of the oppression, and the cause of the cry is, that no place is left for the poor. There is a strong tendency to the accumulation of property, and especially of land, in the hands of a few; but such accumulations of land in a few hands tends to grave national evils—to luxury on the part of the rich, and to lawlessness on the part of the poor—and, therefore, instead of being promoted, should be discouraged by the legislature. But year by year we have been adding "field to field, and house to house," till we have left the poor no place. Rights of common and rights of pasture have been taken away, and the beer-shop established by law to occupy that time which

otherwise would have been employed in healthy toil for a happy family. Little farms, held by working farmers, have been joined together, so that one may live in luxury, where ten families once dwelt in simplicity and plenty. The cottager, with his little field, that once looked so fruitful and trim, cheering the eye and charming the heart, not only of himself, but of beings dear to and dependent upon him, has been driven into some town to add to its misery, its debasement, and its discontent. Let us pray that there may come a time when the gentle in rank shall be gentle in very deed; when the rich shall recognise that they are trustees for God, and shall use their property for the purposes for which He has placed it in their hands; when allotment acts shall remedy the ruin which enclosure acts have wrought; when an enlightened self-love, arising out of the possession of something to love, shall render the demagogue and the inciter to outrage a foreigner to our land; and when our "common Father shall find that "justice and righteousness" for which He looks. — *R. C. Parkman, B.A., Sermons* (1843), No. X.

Wild Grapes.

v. 8–23. *Woe unto them that join house to house, &c.*

It is important to remember that this whole chapter constitutes one prophecy. Much of the power of its teaching will be lost, if this fact be overlooked. In verses 1–7, we have the astonishing declaration that in "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts" He has discovered, not the excellent fruit He had a right to expect, but "wild grapes." In verses 8–23, some of these "wild grapes" are specified and denounced. Surveying His vineyard the Husbandman beheld—

I. Not the gracious fruit of generosity, but the evil fruits of GREED and PRIDE. He saw men, not content with the possessions which Providence had conferred upon them, nor those which honest industry would enable them to secure, but coveting their neighbour's possessions, and hesitating at no means that would enable them to gratify their desires (Micah. ii. 1, 2); beating down their equals, that they themselves might dwell in solitary grandeur (ver. 8). Note, 1, that the aggregation of landed property here denounced was directly contrary to most explicit Divine ordinances (Num. xxxvi. 7; Lev. xxv. 23, 24) (*α*). 2. The conduct here denounced has its counterparts to-day—in the matter of land, great landowners buying up all the little farms adjoining their estates, and turning fruitful valleys into deer-runs; in trade, great capitalists subjecting their less wealthy rivals to ruinous competition, &c., &c., (*β*). 3. That it is not merely particular manifestations of the spirit of greed and pride, but the spirit itself, that provokes the indignation of the bountiful Giver of all good. Covetousness and arrogance are not confined to any particular class. The tenth commandment exists for the poor as well as for the rich.

II. Not the excellent fruit of temperance, but the evil fruit of SENSUAL INDULGENCE (ver. 11, 12). He saw men living for mere pleasure, without any recognition of the "work" which He had wrought for them as a nation, without any acknowledgment of His goodness to them as individuals, without any remembrance of the purpose of their being (*γ*).

III. Not the excellent fruit of reverence for God's Word, but the evil fruit of SCOFFING. The messengers whom He sent to recall them to duty, they scorned; the warnings which He mercifully sent to them of the judgments impending over them, they turned into merriment. Instead of forsaking their sins, they yoked themselves to them with renewed determination (verses 18, 19).

IV. Not the noble fruit of a recognition of the truth, but the evil fruit of INFIDELITY—that intellectual scepticism which seeks to destroy the very foundations of morality, and which

prepares men for vice of all kinds, and hardens them therein, by confounding vice with virtue, and denying man's moral accountability.

V. Not the befitting fruit of humility nd desire for Divine guidance, but the evil fruit of SELF-SUFFICIENCY (ver 21). Clever and successful "men of the world," they resented the idea of their needing counsel and help as an insult. They were their own gods. Trusting in themselves with unfaltering confidence, they excluded from their minds all thought of Him in whom they lived and moved and had their being. Conceiving that they owed all their prosperity to their own wisdom and prudence, how could they give Him thanks? Confident that they would be equal to every emergency of life, how could they lift up to Him one real prayer?

VI. Not the indispensable fruit of righteousness in those who are called to rule, but that evil fruit which always excites His hottest indignation, DENIAL OF JUSTICE TO THE POOR. He saw the judges taking their seats on the judicial bench, not with clear intellects and the love of righteousness enthroned in their hearts, but besotted and brutalised by strong drink; not dispensing justice, but selling their verdict to those who could furnish them most amply with the means of gratifying their sensual lusts (ver. 22, 23). Than the denial of justice there is no more cruel wrong.

These were the "wild grapes" which God saw when He looked down upon His ancient vineyard. Was it any wonder that He brake down the wall thereof, and gave it over to destruction? These are the "wild grapes" which He sees brought forth only too abundantly when He looks down upon this land. Is it not a wonder that He spares the nation to which we belong? 1. Let us beseech Him still to spare us, for the sake of the "ten righteous" who dwell among us. 2. Let us recognise that the most urgent duty to which we are called as patriots is the abatement of those iniquities which justly kindle God's indignation against us. 3. Let us as individuals search and see what fruits are being brought forth in the vineyard of our own souls, lest while we are deploring the iniquities of our land and time, and, it may be, are labouring to lessen them, there grow up within us "wild grapes" which will bring down upon us the Divine condemnation.

(α) Political philosophy has much to say in favour of laws and institutions, at certain periods of a nation's growth, for encouraging, or at least permitting, the disposition of its members to found families, to be maintained by hereditary possessions in land. Yet, if this disposition be not kept within bounds, those who are influenced by it will "join house to house, and field to field, till there be no place;" till the race of small landholders, yeomen, and partly independent tenants, is swallowed up by a few rich despots. To prevent this evil among the Hebrews, Moses directed as equal a division of the land as possible in the first instance, among the 600,000 families who originally formed the nation; and provided against the permanent alienation of any estate, by giving a right of repurchase to the seller and his relations, and of repossession without purchase at the Jubilee. The story of Naboth illustrates the effect of these laws in forming an order of sturdy, independent yeomen; but it must also be taken as an instance of the habitual breach of the same laws by the rich and powerful (cf. Micah ii.; Neh. v. 1–13; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21); as they in like manner disobeyed that respecting the liberation of slaves at the Jubilee (Jer. xxxiv. 8–16). In England, where the Norman conquest accumulated all the land in the hands of a few nobles, the like accumulation has been opposed —however imperfectly—by laws in their form exactly opposite to those of Moses; by the permission to cut off old entails, and the prohibition to make new ones except for one generation, and by allowing land to be bought and sold like other commodities.—*Strachey*, pp. 65, 66.

(β) The covetous man is like a spider. As in this, that he does nothing but lay his nets to catch every fly, gaping only for a booty of gain. So yet more, in that while he makes nets for these flies, he consumes his own bowels; so that which is his life is his death. If there be any creature miserable, it is he; and yet he is least to be pitied, because he makes himself miserable. Such as he is I will account him; and will therefore sweep down his webs, and hate his poison.—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

Covetous worldlings will hardly spare the poor some of their fire to warm them, some of their water to drink, some of their ground to lodge on, though it were no more hurt to them than the lighting of a candle at their torch.—*Adams*, 1653.

(γ) Let us remember that it will be to small purpose to enjoy these worldly pleasures of sin for a season, and in the end plunge ourselves into everlasting death;—that the world's music is but the syren's song, which allures us to make shipwreck of our souls on the rocks of sin, and while it tickles the ear it wounds us to the very heart;—that though the cup which it offers be of gold, and the drink sweet in taste, yet it is deadly poison in operation; for they that drink thereof are so lulled asleep in pleasures and security, that they never awaken out of their spiritual lethargy; or if they do, yet like Sampson, without strength to resist the spiritual Philistines, after the world (like Delilah) has lulled them awhile in her lap of carnal pleasures.—*Downame*, 1642.

Covetousness.

v. 8–10. *Woe unto them that join house to house, &c.*

Covetousness is — I. Ruinous to the individual (α). II. Mischievous to society. III. Offensive to God. IV. Certain to be punished. 1. Here, by disappointment and loss (Prov. iii. 33) (β). 2. Hereafter, by exclusion from heaven (1 Cor. vi. 10; Eph. v. 5) (γ). —*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(α) The love of money can never keep good quarter with honesty; there is a mint of fraud in the worldly breast, and it can coin lies as fast as utterance.—*Adams*, 1653.

The avaricious man is like a pig, which seeks its food in the mud, without caring where it comes from.—*Vianney.*

(β) As Moses only saw the land of Canaan, but for his sin was not permitted to have any share or portion in it, so misers have, for their miserable covetousness, this punishment by God inflicted on them, that they shall only see their goods with eyes, but never enjoy them for their comfort; and that they shall toil and moil for their successor, oftentimes not knowing who he shall be, and receive no manner of benefit by their own labour. But as pipes keep none of the water to themselves that runs through them, but convey it all to their cisterns, so they are not able to retain any of the goods which they possess, for their own benefit and comfort, but only serve as overseers to convey them to their heirs.—*Downame*, 1642.

(γ) If a man, sick on his bed, burning of a fever, fetching his breath with straitness and shortness, looking like earth, says he is well in health, we do not believe him: so if we see men swelling with pride, flaming with lust, looking earthy with covetousness, and yet flattering themselves with hope of salvation, we cannot credit them, all the world cannot save them.—*Adams*, 1654.

The covetous is like a camel, with a great hunch on his back; heaven-gate must be made higher and broader, or he will hardly get in.—*Adams*, 1653.

God's Curse on the Covetous.

v. 8. *Woe unto them that join house to house, &c.*

God's curse is in the habitation of the wicked. 1. Sometimes the curse enters into their hearts, and prevents them from enjoying comfort in their estates, and perplexes them with fears and cares about their possessions (α). 2. At other times it wastes and consumes them like a moth, or suddenly devours them by fire and sword. 3. In some existences they are suddenly and unexpectedly snatched away from their enjoyments by death (β).—*Macculloch, Lectures on Isaiah*, i. 275.

(α) The covetous man pines in plenty, like Tantalus, up to the chin.—*Adams*, 1693.

I doubt not many covetous men take a great deal of pleasure in ruminating upon their wealth, and in recounting what they have; but they have a great deal of tormenting care and fear about it; and if they had not, it is very hard to understand where the reasonable pleasure and happiness lies of having things to no end. It is, at the best, like that of some foolish birds, which, they say, take pleasure in stealing money, that they may hide it; as if it were worth the while for men to take pains to dig silver out of the earth, for no other purpose but to melt it down and stamp it, and bury it there again.—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(β) What can be more miserable, than for a man to toil and labour his whole life, and to have no power to enjoy any fruit of his labours? to bear like an ass a golden burden all the day, and, without any further use of it, at night to have it taken away, reserving nothing to himself but a galled conscience?—*Downame*, 1644.

THE MISERIES OF THE DRUNKARD.

v. 11. *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, &c.*

The miseries of the drunkard. I. Personal, ungodly companionship, eclipse of intellect, demoralisation of nature (α), retribution, here and hereafter. II. Domestic, poverty (β), dissension, vice, misery.—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(α) Not in the day of thy drunkenness only dost thou undergo the harm of drunkenness, but also after that day. And as when a fever is passed by, the mischievous consequences of the fever remain, so also when drunkenness is passed, the disturbance of intoxication is whirling round both soul and body. And while the wretched body lies paralysed, like the hull of a vessel after a shipwreck, the soul yet more miserable than it, even when this is ended, stirs up the storm, and kindles desire; and when one seems to be sober, then most of all is he mad, imagining to himself wine and casks, cups and goblets.

And like as in a storm when the raging of the water has ceased, the loss by reason of the storm remains; so likewise here too. For as there of our freight, so here too is there a casting away of nearly all our good things. Whether it be temperance, or modesty, or understanding, or meekness, or humility, which the drunkenness finds there, it casts all away into the sea of iniquity.

But in what follows there is no more any likeness. Since there, indeed, upon the casting out the vessel is lightened, but here it is weighed down the more. For in its former place of wealth it takes on board sand, and salt water, and all the accumulated filth of drunkenness, enough to sink the vessel at once, with the mariners and the pilot.—*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

(β) Thieves cannot steal land, unless they be Westminster Hall thieves, crafty contenders that eat out a true title with a false evidence; but the drunkard robs himself of his lands. Now he dissolves an acre, and then an acre, into the pot, till he hath ground all his ground at the malt-quern, and run all his patrimony through his throat. Thus he makes himself the living tomb of his forefathers, of posterity. He needs not trouble his sick mind with a will, nor distrust the fidelity of executors. He drowns all his substance at the ale-fat, and though he devours much, is the leaner every way. Drunkenness is a costly sin. It is like gunpowder, many a man is blown up by it. He throws his house so long out at windows, till at last his house throws him out of doors. This is a tippler's progress: from luxury to beggary; from beggary to thievery; from the tavern to Tyburn; from the alehouse to the gallows.—*Adams*, 1653.

NATIONAL UNGODLINESS.

v. 11–17. *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, &c.*

National ungodliness. I. Its phases, dissipation, drunkenness, forgetfulness of God. II. Its punishment, captivity, famine, pestilence, humiliation. III. The certainty of its visitation, God must be vindicated, His people must be delivered (α).—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(α) The individual culprit may sometimes
Unpunished to his after-reckoning go:
Not thus collective man; for public crimes
Draw on their proper punishment below.
When nations go astray, from age to age
The effects remain, a fatal heritage.

Bear witness, Egypt, thy huge monuments,
Of priestly fraud and tyranny austere!
Bear witness thou, whose only name presents
All holy feelings to religion dear—
In earth's dark circlet once the precious gem
Of living light—O fallen Jerusalem!
—*Southey.*

SENSUALITY.

v. 11, 12. *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands.*

Sensuality. I. Its features. II. Follies. III. Its inconsideration (α). IV. Its punishment.—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(α) Of all men out of hell, none more to be pitied than he who hangs over its mouth, and yet is without fear. What good does physic poured down a dead man's throat? If he

cannot be chafed to some sense of his condition, all applications are hopeless; and if sharp affliction, which is the strongest physic, leaves the sinner senseless, there is little prospect that anything else will do him good.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

Oh, what a sight is it to see a man go merry and laughing towards damnation, and make a jest of his own undoing! to see him at the brink of hell, and will not believe it; like a madman boasting of his wit, or a drunken man boasting of his sobriety; or as the swine is delighted when the butcher is shaving his throat to cut it; or as the fatted lambs are skipping in the pasture, that to-morrow must be killed and eaten; or as the bird sits singing when the gun is levelled to kill him; or as the greedy fish run, striving which shall catch the bait, that must presently be snatched out of their element, and lie dying on the bank.—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

Earthly Amusement.

v. 12. *The harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands.*

Earthly amusement. I. Its ordinary features. II. Its mischievous tendency (α). III. Its consequent sinfulness.—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(α) If you have glutted yourself with worldly pleasures, it is no wonder that you should find an unsavoury taste in spiritual delights. Doves that are already filled find cherries bitter.—*Francis de Sales.*

Festivity and Forgetfulness.

v. 12. *The harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands.*

I. Prosperity ought to lead to praise. We should have expected that when a man was able to spread a feast, and God had caused his "cup to run over" with bounties, his heart would have overflowed with gratitude to the Giver of all good. II. As a matter of fact, **prosperity is hostile to the spiritual life.** Experience teaches that in proportion as men prosper, they seek luxury, invent pleasures, and give up allegiance to God (α); and as soon as men yield to the passions of the flesh, and pursue the fashions of the world, all adequate sense or knowledge of the operations of a Supreme Being is gone; all serious views of life are set aside; and the end of such a career is banished from view (β). **III. To permit the pleasures of life to absorb our attention is degrading to the nature entrusted to us by God. IV. It is destructive of the happiness which thus is mistakenly sought.** In the hearts of the guests at a feast there is often anything but festivity. Many vacant minds and languid hearts are there; some who are in reality fleeing from themselves, and drowning rising reflections in fresh engagements of pleasure (γ). Could you see those hearts as God sees them, if you are a Christian, you would be thankful that you are excluded from the festivity.

Application.—1. *To the rich and prosperous.* Be on your guard. In your prosperity there is a deadly peril. Remember that while innocent enjoyment is lawful, there are other duties of more importance—duties of mind and soul, of influence and responsibility; duties toward the men of our generation, and towards God to whom we are accountable. 2. *To the poor.* Murmur not that prosperity has been denied you. Wealth might have been your eternal ruin. Envy not the momentary flash of worldly pomp: soon the deluded soul must be summoned into the solitude of the chamber of death; nothing to console the vacant mind; nothing to cheer the throbbing heart; the rolling eye looks in vain for rest, but the life of vanity closes, and conscience pierces the departing soul with this declaration, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."—*B. Thompson, Church Sermons by Eminent Clergymen*, i. 395–400.

(α) Nothing shall more effectually betray the heart into a love of sin and a loathing of holiness, than an ill-managed prosperity. It is like some meats, the more luscious, so much the more dangerous. Prosperity and ease

upon an unsanctified, impure heart, is like the sunbeams upon a dunghill; it raises many filthy, noisome exhalations. The same soldiers who, in hard service, are in perfect subjection to their leaders, in peace and luxury are apt to rebel; [and the passions, which in adversity are easily controlled, in prosperity are apt to break loose]. That corrupt affection which has lain, as it were, dead and frozen in the midst of distracting business, or under adversity, when the sun of prosperity has shined upon it, then, like a snake, it presently recovers its former strength and venom. Vice must be caressed and smiled upon that it may thrive and sting. It is starved by poverty, it droops under the frowns of fortune, and pines away upon bread and water; but when the channels of plenty run high, and every appetite is plied with abundance and variety, so that *satisfaction* is but a mean word to express its enjoyment, then the inbred corruption of the heart shows itself pampered and insolent, too unruly for discipline, and too big for correction.—*South*, 1633–1716.

(β) It is a hard thing for princes to remember death. They have no leisure to think of it, but chop into the earth before they beware, like a man who walks over a field covered with snow, and sees not his way, but when he thinks to run on, suddenly falls into a pit: even so they who have all things at will, and swim in pleasure, which as a snow covers their way and dazzles their sight, while they think to live on, and rejoice still, suddenly rush upon death, and make shipwreck in a calm sea.—*Henry Smith*, 1593.

(γ) Colonel Gardiner relates that when he was considered by his gay military companions to be one of the most handsome and highly favoured officers of his day, he has seen a dog enter the mess-room, prowling for food, and looked at the creature with envy, inwardly groaning and exclaiming, "Oh, that I were that dog!" Since his time thousands have felt the same iron enter their souls, although looked upon by their comrades as men enjoying life in rich abundance.—*Holderness*.

The Evils of Ignorance.

(Sunday School or Bible Society Sermon.)

v. 13–15. *Therefore my people are gone away into captivity, because they have no knowledge, &c.*

Isaiah speaks of the future as if it were already present. He traces the terrible disasters about to befall his countrymen to their true cause—their ignorance of God,—in their case a wilful ignorance (Hosea iv. 6), which had betrayed them into courses of conduct ruinous in themselves, and certain to bring down the judgments of the Almighty. The history of mankind justifies us in laying down two propositions: **I. That ignorance is a terrible evil.** To be in ignorance of the great facts of God's universe, of the great laws by which He governs it, is to be in a condition of constant peril. We are as men who wander in darkness over the great mountains; every step may be taking us further from the right path, the next step may hurl us over some unsuspected precipice. Remember what calamities—political, commercial, social—have been due solely to ignorance. [Illustrate by examples] (α). **II. That the most terrible of all kinds of ignorance is ignorance of God Himself.** 1. *Much sin is due to ignorance* (β). Not *all* sin, for there are many transgressions committed against full light—the worst form of iniquity. But concerning multitudes of sinners we may pray, as did our Lord for His executioners, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The most appalling of all sins was committed in ignorance (1 Cor. ii. 8). Did men truly *know* God, they would fear, love, and gladly serve Him. For lack of a true knowledge of God, men who desired to serve Him have perpetrated the most frightful crimes (John xvi. 2; Acts xxvi. 9). 2. *Sins committed in ignorance entail terrible disasters.* That unavoidable ignorance is a palliation of the guilt of transgressors is clearly the teaching of the New Testament (Luke xxiii. 34; 1 Tim. i. 13), as it had been previously of the Old (Num. xv. 28; Deut. xix. 4, &c.); and it will affect their condition in the eternal world (Luke xii. 47, 48). But here and now it does nothing to exempt men from the natural consequences of their transgressions. The man who swallows a poison by mistake is killed by it as surely as the deliberate suicide, &c.

In view of these solemn truths, of

which all human history is one prolonged corroboration,—1. *We should constantly endeavour to grow in knowledge.* "More light!" should be our constant prayer. Every means of acquainting ourselves with God and His will we should diligently use. Let us beware of the temptation indolently to rest in a voluntary ignorance. Voluntary ignorance is no palliation, but a tremendous aggravation of iniquity (γ). 2. *Let us diligently impart to our fellow-men such knowledge as we have already acquired.* Benevolence should move us to do this. We can confer upon our fellow-men no greater or more needed blessing. Self-interest should impel us to the same course. In teaching we learn. In labouring to cause others to see, we ourselves for the first time attain to clear vision. Knowledge is like the bread with which the five thousand were fed; it multiplies as it is dispensed, and when the feast is over, those who carried it to others themselves possess more than they did when the feast began. 3. *Every organisation which exists for the diffusion of knowledge should have our sympathy and support both as patriots and Christians.* This is true even of secular knowledge, but especially of that knowledge which is able to make men "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (δ).

(α) As blindness is the deformity of the face, so is ignorance the deformity of the soul. As the want of fleshly eyes spoils the beauty of the face, so the want of spiritual eyes spoils the beauty of the soul. A man without knowledge is as a workman without his hands, as a painter without his eyes, as a traveller without his legs, or as a ship without sails, or a bird without wings, or like a body without a soul.—*Brooks*, 1680.

(β) Ignorance opens the door for Satan to enter in with his troops of lusts; where the watch is blind, the city is soon taken.—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(γ) He that knew not his Lord's will, because he wilfully rejected the means of coming to the knowledge of it, deserves to be beaten with as many stripes as if he had known it and would not. He that will not take notice of the king's proclamation, or will stop his ears when it is read, and afterwards offends against it, does equally deserve punishment with those who have read it, and heard it, and disobey it; because he was as grossly faulty in not knowing it; and there is no reason that any man's gross fault should be his excuse.—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(δ) Oh, for the coming of that glorious time
When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
And best protection, this imperial realm,
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
An obligation, on her part, to teach
Them who are born to serve her and obey;
Binding herself by stature to secure
For all the children whom her soil maintains
The rudiments of letters, and inform
The mind with moral and religious truth,
Both understood and practised,—so that none,
However destitute, be left to droop
By culture unsustained; or run
Into a wild disorder; or be forced
To drudge through a weary life without the help
Of intellectual implements and tools;
A savage horde among the civilised;
A servile band among the lordly free.
—*Wordsworth*.

Death and the Grave.

(*For Easter Sunday.*)

v. 14, 15. *Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, &c.*

In these terms of appalling sublimity Isaiah warns his countrymen of the calamities that were about to come upon them, on account of the innumerable transgressions into which they had been betrayed by their wilful ignorance of God. Therefore they should be carried away into captivity (ver. 13), and therefore also the sword, famine, and pestilence would conspire to fill the "under-world" with inhabitants. That "under-world" is represented as preparing itself for their reception, as a ravenous beast opens wide its jaws to devour its prey (**Text**). A prediction which, to the prosperous, wealthy, and powerful nation over which Uzziah ruled, doubtless seemed

the most extravagant raving of fanaticism, but which was fulfilled nevertheless.

It is of the "under-world" that Isaiah speaks. "Therefore the under-world opens its jaws wide, and stretches open its mouth immeasurably wide; and the glory of Jerusalem descends, and its tumult, and noise, and those who rejoice within it. There are mean men bowed down, and lords humbled, and the eyes of lofty men are humbled."—*Delitsch.* Our translation "hell" must not lead us to think merely of the place where the wicked are tormented; it is of conquests about to be achieved by death and the grave that Isaiah warned the men of his time. His prediction suggests a topic of which men of all times will do well to think, and that again another topic peculiarly suited to this day. Let us bethink ourselves—

I. Of THE CONQUESTS OF DEATH AND THE GRAVE. 1. **These conquests have been effected in all ages.** Generation after generation of mankind has been swept away by these grim and ancient warriors. During successive centuries men have gained wonderful power over the forces of nature, but they have acquired no real increase of ability to withstand these dread destroyers. All that science can do is in a few cases for a very short time to defer their victory. The "Elixir of Life" has been sought for in vain.—If in feebleness of mankind we had not sufficient proof of our fallen condition, certainly we should find it in the fact, that so many men have allied themselves with these foes of our race. All nations have conferred their brightest honours on those who have been the most successful ministers of death. Warrior and hero have been regarded as synonymous terms. In no respect is modern science more industrious, earnest or successful, than in the search for the means by which human life may be destroyed most easily on the largest scale. II. **They have been characterised by a solemn impartiality.** With them there has been no respect of persons. (1.) *Meanness is no security against them.* Poverty and lowliness are not without their compensations, as the poorer Jews discovered, when they saw the nobles and men of wealth, whom they had been accustomed to envy, carried away miserable captives, while they themselves were left behind (2 Kings xxiv. 14–16, &c). There are those whom human conquerors will not stoop to molest. But death and the grave have no such fastidiousness. They prey on the mean as well as the mighty. (2.) *Might is no defence against them.* Rank and wealth can accomplish much, but they cannot overawe or bribe death (α). Death works like a reaper in the dark, cutting down the tall ears of corn as well as the grass that struggles for existence between them, the fair flowers as well as the noisome weeds. III. **They have been characterised by a terrible unexpectedness.** They are certain, but they cannot be foreseen. While they proceed with all the steadiness of gravitation, it is as impossible to foretell *where* they will be next accomplished, as it is to predict from which part of the heavens the next flash of lightning will burst forth, on which spot of earth the destructive fire will fall. Hence the wisdom of living in continual preparedness for the great change which will come to us all (β).

II. This survey of the conquests of death and the grave should remind us that there is another side to this solemn theme, and therefore I proceed to remind you, secondly, of THE CONQUERORS OF DEATH AND THE GRAVE. Through how many centuries did men live without any conception that these conquerors of our race might themselves be subjugated! Two astonishing events, indeed, occurred—the translation of Enoch and the rapture of Elijah—but their significance could not be fully understood at the time of their occurrence. The data for their complete interpretation had not then been furnished. But when that supreme event which we commemorate to-day occurred, these and many other mysteries were solved. When the Son of

man, who had been crucified, emerged from the tomb, proclamation was made to the universe that the ancient power of death and the grave was broken. It was seen that it is possible to pass through them unharmed, and to return to the activities of life, not with diminished, but with increased, vigour. And He who demonstrated this astonishing truth has pledged Himself to accomplish for all who trust in Him a victory similar to His own. By faith in this pledge, countless millions have been enabled to triumph in spirit over Death at the very moment when he seemed to be numbering them also among his victims (1 Cor. xv. 55–57).

I. The victory of Christ's followers over death and the grave is real. There seems to be one event unto all (Eccles. ix. 2, 3). But it is not so. Death is not the conqueror of Christ's servants; he is God's servant, sent to conduct them to the rest prepared for them. The grave is not their prison, but a quiet resting-place from which pretly the mortal body shall come forth immortal to greet the eternal morning.

II. The victory of Christ's followers over death and the grave will ere long be manifest (1 Thess. iv. 14–16, &c.) In the doctrine of the resurrection, there is much that is mysterious and inexplicable, but *this* is certain, that the seeming victory of death and the grave over Christ's followers shall be utterly reversed; as not a hoof belonging to God's ancient people was left behind in Egypt, so NOTHING that belongs to a single follower of Christ upon which death and the grave have seized shall remain in their power (Hos. xiii. 14). The resurrection will be more than a ransom. It will be a development (1 Cor. xv. 37, 38, 42, 44). In view of these truths, let us to-day keep Easter with thankful and joyful hearts.

(α) Look how easily Jehu stamped Jezebel in pieces, and Tamerlane's troops of horse the Turkish footmen; or as the sturdy steed dashes out the little whappet's brains, so easily does Death, with the least kick and spurn of his heel, the halest complexion, the stoutest constitution, — triumphing like an emperor over all sorts of people; treading on the necks of kings and princes, as Joshua over them in the cave; insulting in the terms of Rabshakeh: "Where is Hamath? the kings of Arphad, Ivah, and Sepharvaim? Elam, Meshach, and Tubal, whose fear was upon the living, are they not descended into the grave? made their beds in the slimy valley, and laid their swords under their heads? Hath wisdom delivered, strength rescued, or wealth rescued any out my fingers?"—*Ward*, 1577–1639.

Oh, eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world has flattered, thou alone hast cast out of the world and despised. Thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all with those two narrow words, *Hic jacet.*—*Sir Walter Raleigh.*

(β) We put far away the evil day, and therefore we are not duly impressed by the thought. But fourscore years are soon cut off, and we fly away; and how uncertain is our reaching that lonely verge of life, where the flowery meadows and the golden corn-fields slope gradually down into the bare and stony beach that fringes the eternal sea. The coast of death to most is an abrupt precipice; we are cut off in the midst of our days.—*Macmillan.*

Why should a man defer that which ought to be the occupation of a life, which ought to command all his powers in all their vigour—why should a man defer that to the last few abrupt moments, to his departure from time to eternity? When a man is going to any distant part of the globe—say to America—what preparation there is! How much it is talked about! It is a long, a distant, an eventful journey. The man talks about it; his friends prepare in every conceivable way. Oh, what infatuation and stupidity, what folly it is for a man to make no preparation for this distant voyage — the voyage to eternity!—*Beaumont.*

Cords of Vanity.

v. 18. *Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.*

"'Sin' in the last clause is parallel with iniquity in the first—a noun and not a verb. Both are said to be '*drawn.*' The style of sinning here contemplated is fully given in the next verse."—*Cowles.*

"They were proud of their unbelief; but this unbelief was like a halter

with which, like beasts of burden, they were harnessed to sin, and therefore to the punishment of sin, which they went on drawing further and further, in utter ignorance of the waggon behind them."—*Delitsch.*

"Cart ropes, you know, are composed of several small cords firmly twisted together, which serve to connect the beasts of burden with the draught they pull after them. These represent a complication of means closely united, whereby the people here described continue to join themselves to the most wearisome of all burdens. They consist of false reasonings, foolish pretexts, and corrupt maxims, by which obstinate transgressors become firmly united to their sins, and persist in dragging after them their iniquities. Of this sort the following are a few specimens: God is merciful, and His goodness will not suffer any of His creatures to be completely and everlastingly miserable. Others, as well as they, are transgressors. Repentance will be time enough upon a deathbed, or in old age. The greatest of sinners often pass unpunished. A future state of retribution is uncertain. Unite these, and such like cords, and, I suppose, you have the cart ropes, whereby the persons mentioned draw after them much sin and iniquity. All these pretexts, however, are light as vanity."—*Maculloch.*

Scepticism.

v. 19. *That say, Let Him make speed and hasten His work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it.*

Scepticism, I. Denies the judgments of God. II. Draws an argument from their delay (*a*). III. Impiously scoffs at the Divine counsels. IV. Defies God to do His worst.—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(*a*) The whole force of life and experience goes to prove that right or wrong-doing, whether in relation to the physical or the spiritual nature, is sure, in the end, to meet its appropriate reward or punishment. Penalties are often so long delayed, that men think they shall escape them; but some time they are certain to follow. When the whirlwind sweeps through the forest, at its first breath, or almost as if the fearful stillness that precedes had crushed it, the giant tree, with all its boughs, falls crashing to the ground. But it had been preparing to fall for twenty years. Twenty years before it received a gash. Twenty years before the water commenced to settle in at some crotch, and from thence decay began to reach in with its silent fingers towards the heart of the tree. Every year the work of death progressed, till at length it stood, all rottenness, only clasped about by the bark with a semblance of life, and the first gale felled it to the ground. Now, there are men who, for twenty years, have shamed the day and wearied the night with their debaucheries, but who yet seem strong and vigorous, and exclaim, "You need not talk of penalties. Look at me! I have revelled in pleasure for twenty years, and I am as hale and hearty today as ever." But in reality they are full of weakness and decay. They have been preparing to fall for twenty years, and the first disease strikes them down in a moment.

Ascending from the physical nature of man to the mind and character, we find the same laws prevail. People sometimes say, "Dishonesty is as good as honesty, for aught I see. There are such and such men who have pursued for years the most corrupt courses in their business, and yet they prosper, and are getting rich every day." Wait till you see their end. Every year how many such men are overtaken with sudden destruction, and swept for ever out of sight and remembrance! Many a man has gone on in sin, practising secret fraud and villanies, yet trusted and honoured, till at length, in some unsuspected hour, he is detected, and, denounced by the world, he falls from his high estate as if a cannon-ball had struck him—for there is no cannon that can strike more fatally than outraged public sentiment—and flies over the mountains, or across the sea, to escape the odium of his life. He believed that his evil course was building him up in fame and fortune; but financiering is the devil's forge, and his every act was a blow upon the anvil, shaping the dagger that should one day strike home to his heart and make him a suicide. The pea contains the vine, and the flower, and the pod, in embryo, and, I am sure, when I plant it, that it will produce them and nothing else. Now, every action of our lives is embryonic, and, according as it is right or wrong, it will surely bring forth sweet flowers of joy, or the poison fruits of sorrow. Such is the constitution of this world, and the Bible assures us that the next world only carries it forward. Here and hereafter, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—*Beecher.*

The Influence of Language on Character.

v. 20. *Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.*

Only those who have had extensive opportunities of observation, can have any idea of the evil influence of the abuse and misapplication of *words* in questions of religion and morals, especially among the young (*a*). To an almost incredible degree the distinctness of our associations and intellectual perceptions depends upon our correct use of the machinery of words. From long usage, words become at length identified in the mind with the things we have accustomed them to represent. What, then, must be the effect when language is deliberately misapplied for the express purpose of confounding the distinctions of right and wrong! For various reasons, it is more easy to misapply words in relation to morals, than in relation to other subjects. 1. Ethical propositions are to a great degree incapable of absolute proof. 2. In discussing the great topics of morals, very few persons bring a perfectly unbiassed mind to the task. 3. Vice and virtue, though essentially distinct as qualities, are still in many cases nothing more than different modifications of some common subject. The line which separates the use of a thing from its abuse is not always strongly marked; or rather is sufficiently indistinct for those who are determined not to see clearly to afford themselves a plausible justification for the aberration of their choice. But on all these accounts we should be the more careful to use accurate language on all questions of morals, especially in society, where the temptation to speak as others are speaking is so strong. Two things especially lead to that perversion of language which our text condemns. 1. Men "call evil good," *from an almost irresistible desire to cloak and veil their vices.* It is one of ten thousand daily recurring proofs of the strange inconsistencies of human nature, that the same persons whose conscience will not recoil for a moment at the actual commission of deeds of sin and atrocity, and who even appear to defy public opinion in the conduct they are pursuing, will still to the last shrink from the admission of those terms which really characterise their conduct. It is the appellation and not the actual guilt which to them constitutes the disgrace. 2. Men "call good evil," *from a desire to defend themselves from the condemnation passed upon them by the better example of others.* They attempt, in the first place, by palliations and misstatements, to render vice less odious than it really is; and secondly, by attributing to the pious unworthy and corrupt motives, to render unamiable that goodness in others which they want strength of mind and of principle to imitate. From this latter species of wickedness very few stand perfectly clear. Which of us has never felt as a reproach the example of principles better and holier than our own, nor attempted in consequence to restore the equilibrium of our self-respect, not by improving our own practice, but by depreciating and ridiculing that which as Christians it was our duty to admire? Let us be on our guard against disparaging that sincerity of disposition, which strives to regulate its conduct by the unbending Christian standard, by calling it "enthusiasm," "fanaticism," "austerity." Enough difficulty, we know from our own experience, lies in the way of every man's spiritual improvement, without throwing in his path the additional obstacles of ridicule, contempt, and odium, which few minds, even the most religious, have sufficient fortitude to despise. (Matt. xxiii. 13; Mark ix. 42.) Thus, to "call good evil" is to imitate the Pharisees (Mark iii. 22), and comes perilously near committing the sin against the Holy Ghost.—*P. R. Shuttleworth, D.D., Sermons*, 117–143.

(*a*) The world is generally governed by words and shows: for men can swallow the

same thing under one name, which they would abominate and detest under another. The name of king was to the old Romans odious and insufferable; but in Sylla and Julius Cæsar they could endure the power and absoluteness of a king, disguised under the name of dictator.—*South*, 1633–1716.

I think that one of the master incantations, one of the most signal deceits, which we practise upon ourselves, comes from the use of language. There are words that we learn in childhood which we abandon when we come to manhood. Generally speaking, our fireside words are old Saxon words—short, knotty, tough, and imbued with moral and affectional meanings; but as we grow older these words are too rude and plain for our use, and so we get Latin terms and periphrases by which to express many of our thoughts. When we talk about ourselves we almost invariably use Latin words, and when we talk about our neighbours we use Saxon words. And one of the best things a man can do, I think, is to examine himself in the Saxon tongue. If a man tells that which is contrary to truth, let him not say, "I equivocate;" let him say "I lie." *Lie!* why, it brings the judgment-day right home to a man's thought. Men do not like it, but it is exactly the thing that will most effectually touch the moral sense; and the more the moral sense is touched the better. If a man has departed from rectitude in his dealings with another, let him not say "I took advantage," which is a roundabout, long sentence: let him say, "*I cheated.*" That is a very direct word. It springs straight to the conscience, as the arrow flies from the bow to the centre of the mark. Does it grate harshly on your ear? Nevertheless, it is better that you should employ it; and you should come to this determination: "I will call things that I detect in my conduct by those clear-faced, rough-tongued words that my enemies use if they wanted to sting me to the quick."—*Beecher.*

The Sin of Confounding Good and Evil.

v. 20. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.*

The conscience of every man testifies that there is an unchangeable difference between good and evil; but each man is prone to think his own vice little or no sin at all. He substitutes other names for his crime, and calls his evil good. I. Many are self-deceived (Prov. xiv. 12). How many think themselves religious, merely because they pay some or much respect to the outward ordinances of religion, while there is no change in their character. How many justify their irreligion, by depicting religion as morose and gloomy. How many commit crimes without one misgiving of conscience, merely because they are varnished over by specious names. How often under the pretence of promoting the honour of true religion, massacres and murders have been sanctified; the torch of persecution brandished round, and the flame of civil discord raised, to light the path to heaven! II. Many endeavour to deceive others, by false representations of sin and duty (Luke xvii. 1, 2).—*George Mathew, M.A., Sermons*, ii. 101–118.

On the Perversion of Right and Wrong.

v. 20. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.*

There is in many a wonderful propensity to perplex the distinctions between right and wrong, and to obscure the boundaries of virtue and vice. Their propensity is both absurd and wicked. It most frequently manifests itself in two ways:—1. *By bestowing soft and gentle names on crimes of real and destructive magnitude.* Thus, infidelity and scepticism have been called "free inquiry," indifference to all religion "a spirit of toleration," duelling "an honourable deed," adultery "gallantry," extravagance "a liberal expenditure," the selfish sensualist "a good-natured man." By the use of such false and misleading terms, we lower the standard of right and wrong, and expose ourselves to the temptation of practising what we have persuaded ourselves is not so very wrong. 2. *By applauding works of genius and imagination of which the real tendency is to inflame the passions, and to weaken moral and religious principle.* The tendency of such works should lead us unhesitatingly to condemn and reject them, whatever may be the

literary fascinations of their style. Nothing is more dangerous than a book which imparts to vice the delusive appearance of a virtue. Thus, to confound the distinctions between right and wrong, is to renounce the superiority which man claims over the brute creation—that of being a rational creature, for the brutes are never guilty of anything so irrational as that of calling good evil, and evil good.—*Charles Moore, M.A., Sermons*, ii. pp. 155–172.

The Sin of using Wrong Names.

v. 20. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.*

What difference can it make what anything is called?

"What's in a name?
A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Yet the Bible pronounces its woe upon those who merely call things by wrong names. Why?

1. *Names are not mere words: they are the representatives of ideas; and hence, they have a force of meaning which makes them powerful instruments.* There are opprobrious epithets that wound more severely than a blow. Slander has slain more than the dagger. The name of a place or person suggests to us all that we know, or have conceived, about it or him. Paul, Jesus—what a power there is in these names! How suggestive are the phrases, "an upright man," "a transparent character!" Because words are representatives of ideas, to use wrong names is to convey false ideas. 2. *The wrong use of names confounds moral distinctions, and perplexes and misleads men in regard to duty.* Right must not be called wrong, or wrong right. This is to sweep away all the landmarks of duty; or, rather, it is shifting all the buoys and beacons by which we navigate the sea of life, so that instead of warning us of danger, they shall rather draw us upon shoals and rocks. The skill of every successful errorist consists in a dexterous jugglery of names. 3. *By giving decent names to gross sins, the standard of public morals is lowered, and the community is corrupted.* One of the things that blinded America to the evil of slavery was, the term that used to be applied to it—"our domestic institution," &c. Be on your guard, then, against wrong names. Do not try to deceive yourself by means of them. Pure covetousness is sin, even though you do call it economy, &c. Do not try to deceive others (Matt. v. 19; Mark ix. 42).—*S. G. Buckingham, American National Preacher*, xxxv 269–278.

Self-Conceit.

v. 21. *Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.*

Self-conceit. I. Its signs: dogmatism; contempt of others; scepticism. II. Its causes: ignorance (α); vanity. III. Its folly: it makes a man ridiculous; leads him into error. IV. Its offensiveness to God; in spirit—principle—action. V. Its certain humiliation.—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(α) The truest characters of ignorance
Are vanity, and pride, and arrogance;
As blind men use to bear their noses higher
Than those that have their eyes and sight entire. —*Butler.*

By ignorance is pride increased;
Those most assume who know the least:
Their own self-balance gives them weight,
But every other finds them light.—*Gay.*

Intellectual Pride.

v. 21. *Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.*

Woe to the intellectually proud. I. To the self-conceited sceptic, who sits in judgment upon the Word of God, and condemns it (α). II. To the self-

conceited enthusiast, who substitutes his own fancies for Divine truth. III. To the self-conceited Pharisee, who trusts in his own works. IV. To the self-conceited sinner, who despises instruction. V. Woe! for they shall all perish.—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(a) The denial of anything does not falsify it. If a man has swallowed poison, his adopting an opinion that it cannot kill him, contributes nothing to his safety; and it is awful to stand and see his conviction and his death arriving together. Your denying a resurrection, will not hide you for ever in the grave. Your disbelieving a day of retribution, will not keep you from appearing before God. "Their judgment," says the apostle, "now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not:" while they reason, it rolls on; every argument brings it one distance nearer.—*Jay.*

The Woe of the Drunkard.

v. 22. *Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink.*

There are certain vices which the customs of certain countries seem to place only in the number of human infirmities; and yet, if we look at their effects, we shall see that really they are as black as those sins which God and man visits with the severest punishments. I. The Drunkard's excuses, by which he endeavours to defend or palliate his crime. 1. *Good fellowship.* But can friendship be founded on vice? especially on a vice which notoriously impairs the memory and the sense of obligation, leads to the betrayal of secrets, and stirs up strife and contention? Instead of promoting conversation it destroys it by destroying the very capability of communicating rational and agreeable thoughts. The drunkard may make his company merry, but they laugh at, not with, him, and merely because they are delighted with the sight of one even sillier than themselves. 2. "*It drowns care.*" But the drunkard's care must arise either from his ill state of health, the unfortunate posture of his worldly affairs, or the stings of his guilty conscience; and, in either case, his temporary oblivion is purchased at the cost of an aggravation of the evils which cause him to desire it. To drink to drown remorse is especially absurd, for all that the drunkard can expect from this course is the benefit of travelling some part of the road to eternal misery with his eyes covered. 3. The drunkard has other excuses: he says that he is so exposed to company and business, that he cannot avoid drinking to excess, or that he is of so easy and flexible a temper, that he cannot resist the importunities of his friends, as he calls them. Thus he is for softening his vice into a sort of virtue, and calling that good nature, which his creditor calls villany, and his family cruelty. II. The drunkard's woe. This is made up of the miserable effects, as well temporal as spiritual, of his favourite vice. 1. Poverty. 2. Contempt. 3. Ill-health. 4. An untimely death. Consider, too, the spiritual evils that spring from and punish the vice of drunkenness. 1. The understanding is depraved and darkened. 2. The will is enfeebled and dethroned. 3. The passions are inflamed and rendered ungovernable. 4. Regard for men and reverence for God are destroyed. Drunkenness travels with a whole train of other vices, and requires the whole width of the broad way to give it room. Where its journey is to end, we know; so that if the guilt and misery which attend it here, be not enough, there, at least, the drunkard, having opened his eyes and recovered the use of his reason, will perceive the truth of the text.—*Skelton, in Clapham's Selected Sermons*, ii. 384–392.

The Woe of the Drunkard.

v. 22. *Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink.*

Woe to the drunkard. I. To his reputation (α). II. To his interests. III. To his health. IV. To his family. V. To his soul (β).—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

(α) Some of you glory in your shame, that you have drunk down your companions, and carried it away,—the honour of a sponge or a tub, which can drink up or hold liquor as well as you.—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(β) We commend wine for the excellency of it; but if it could speak, as it can take away speech, it would complain, that by our abuse both the excellencies are lost; for the excellent man doth so spoil the excellent wine, until the excellent wine hath spoiled the excellent man. Oh, that a man should take pleasure in that which makes him no man; that he should let a thief in at his mouth to steal away his wit; that for a little throat-indulgence, he should kill in himself both the first Adam, his reason, and even the second Adam, his regeneration, and so commit two murders at once.—*Adams*, 1653.

How base a price dost thou set upon thy Saviour and salvation, that will not forbear so much as a cup of drink for them? The smallness of the thing showeth the smallness of thy love to God, and the smallness of thy regard to His Word and to thy soul. Is that loving God as God, when thou lovest a cup of drink better? Art thou not ashamed of thy hypocrisy, when thou sayest thou lovest God above all, when thou lovest Him not so well as thy wine and ale? Surely he that loveth Him not above ale, loveth Him not above all! Thy choice showeth what thou lovest best, more certainly than thy tongue doth. It is the dish that a man greedily eateth of that he loveth, and not that which he commendeth but will not meddle with. God trieth men's love to Him, by their keeping His commandments. It was the aggravation of the first sin, that they would not deny so small a thing as the forbidden fruit, in obedience to God! And so it is of thine, that wilt not leave a forbidden cup for Him! O miserable wretch! dost thou not know thou canst not be Christ's disciple, if thou forsake not all for Him, and hate not even thy life in comparison of Him, and wouldst not rather die than forsake Him! And art thou like to lay down thy life for Him that wilt not leave a cup of drink for Him? Canst thou burn at a stake for Him, that canst not leave an alehouse, or vain company, or excess for Him? What a sentence of condemnation dost thou pass upon thyself! —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

Drink and its Woes.

v. 22. *Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink.*

Human depravity and iniquity have existed in all ages and countries. The vices flowing therefrom have been much the same—selfishness, pride, sensualism, oppression, drunkenness. Alcohol acting directly on the brain, the seat of the mind, tends not only to derange, but to enfeeble and pervert, and produces moral obliquity, moral infatuation, and intensified delusion. All sorts of deceits are the consequence. Observe—I. The characters introduced (ver. 22). Observe also verses 11 and 12. In the last verses there is reference to confirmed drunkards, daily, early, and late; the sensual debauchees —their ignorance, want of thought and reflection. In the text, notorious drinkers, bold, impudent wager-layers, boasters, &c., and those who have got the victory over the usual drinks, and now make them stronger to meet the cravings of appetite and to keep up the excitement. Observe, this is the great peril of moderate drinking. It creates the appetite, it increases the appetite; last of all, it gives the appetite the control, and the man or woman becomes the slave and then the victim.

II. The infatuation portrayed —by 1. *Giving false names to things* (ver. 20). Call (1) evil good: drinks (poisons) are called beverages; evil things made by men are called God's good creatures. And so they call (2) good evil; despise the really good and safe; pour contempt on water and safe fluids, and treat them as evil or worthless. How drinks have secured the most alluring titles—strong

cordials, dew, &c., generous. Not only false names, but 2. *False qualities* (ver. 20), "Bitter for sweet." Now intoxicating drinks are not sweet or palatable to the natural taste; they blister the mouth of children; do burn the delicate nerves of the stomach; the tongue and lips have to be trained, drilled, hardened. Observe, they call sweet bitter; things really so are treated as insipid. Ask the spirit-drinker to take milk or tea, or water, and see how his poisoned taste revolts, &c.

Then there is presented to us—3. *Infatuated results.* Put darkness for light; men plead and say these drinks —(1) Brighten the intellect. How false! See the bloated faces, the diseased eyes, the sensual expression, the stupid look, the stupor. The light is artificial, momentary, false—no better than the effects of certain gases or deadly stimulants, as opium, Indian hemp, &c. But they refer to men, to Burns, Pitt, Sheridan, and other drinking wits. But they were intellectually great in spite, &c. Look at Milton, Sir Isaac Newton; look at the inspired prophets — the seraphic Isaiah, the writer of the text. (2) They who drink say their drinks lighten the heart, give social joyousness. Right; but is it not sensual, spurious, evanescent, ends in darkness? So they put light for darkness. The calm, equable sobriety of soul they called dulness, darkness. But this is real, abiding, and rational. So, both in name and quality, and in effects, they call "evil good," &c.

III. THE WOES DENOUNCED. 1. *There is the woe of physical consequences.* The seed and the harvest, the poisons and their effects, fire, deranged stomach, plague, diseased liver, excited heart, fevered brain, all tending to a host of maladies, shortened life, and an early grave. There is—2. *Woe of a distracted mind.* Reason beclouded; reflection, perception, all marred. The guiding star eclipsed, the light obscured with darkness. There is the—3. *Woe of moral defects.* The man is vitiated, made worse and worse; his affections, his desires, his conscience, his heart, the whole soul. There is—4. *The woe of perverted powers.* Gifts, talents, &c., all poisoned; influence deadly; the man a curse—a curse to all. 5. *The woe of God's malediction.* God's woe, His displeasure, His threatening, His curse; this is written in both volumes of the Scriptures—in frightful representation, in declared eternal condemnation.

APPLICATION.—Learn—1. The horrors associated with strong drink; 2. The advantages of absolute temperance; 3. The value of these associations; 4. The encouragement for labours—staying curses, bringing down blessings; 5. The necessity of immediate decision; 6. The solemn importance of earnest prayer for the Divine benediction; 7. Let us avoid exaggerated conclusions. This is not the only evil; temperance not the only good. To all we say, "One thing is needful;" "Except ye be converted," &c.—*Jabez Burns, D.D., LL.D., Sketches of Temperance Sermons.*

THE DOOM OF DESPISERS.

v. 24. *Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

Shut God out of the heart, and *this* is what it comes to at last. In Jewish history, we have a commentary on the judgments announced in the text, written in fire and blood. We have here—I. God's merciful approaches to the soul. 1. God begins with *law.* In the present day there is a nervous dread of law, as if it were the offspring of severity rather than of grace (*a*). But law checks, rectifies, and blesses in innumerable ways (Ps. xix. 7–11; cxix. 105, &c). 2. To His law, He adds His *word;* His "word" of persuasion, exhortation, promise, and especially the great "word" of the Gospel. II. God's merciful approaches rejected. "They have cast away the law," &c.

Man meets God's law with resistance, His love with contempt. III. God's merciful approaches giving place to indignation and wrath. "Therefore as the fire devoureth," &c. Law being resisted, and love despised, things cannot be as they were before; one of two things must happen—there must be either pardon or punishment. If pardon be rejected, only punishment remains. The images under which this is set forth in the text are most alarming. They show—1. *That at last God's anger strikes at the root of our being* —at the very substance of our life. The wrath of man at the worst rages only on the surface, but God strikes at the root (Luke xii. 4; Matt. x. 28). 2. *God's anger smites the blossom of our being.* All that constitutes the show, promise, and pride of our life, is scattered like dust. 3. *When God smites in anger, He smites suddenly and swiftly,* "as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff. 4. *When God smites in anger, man can offer no resistance.* What power to resist a hurricane has a tree whose roots are not only rotten, but "rottenness"? How can the stubble withstand the fire, or the chaff defend itself against tongues of flame?—*J. R. Wood.*

(a) The spring of the law is love. With its "Thou shalt not do this," and "Thou shall not do that," the law presents rather an ungracious aspect. We like ill to be bidden, but worse to be forbidden. But does love never forbid? A mother, does she never forbid her child; but, on the contrary, indulge every caprice and grant all its wishes? How disastrous the fate, and brief the life, of a child denied nothing, indulged in everything, allowed to play with fire, or fire-arms; to devour the painted but poisonous fruit—to bathe where the tide runs like a racehorse or the river rushes roaring into the black, swirling pool. And he who frets against the restraints of God's holy law because it forbids this and the other thing, is no wiser than the infant who weeps, and screams, and struggles, and perhaps beats the kind bosom that nurses it, because its mother has snatched a knife from its foolish hands.—*Guthrie.*

The Doom of Impenitent Israel.

v. 24–30. *Therefore as the fire devoureth, &c.*

In this threatening, fulfilled in the utter destruction of Israel by Assyria, we find illustrations of the following facts:—I. That *the Lord is a God of judgment as well as of mercy* (α). The mercy of God had been exemplified in His long forbearance with sinful Israel: His justice was manifested in the utter destruction that came upon Israel when it was seen that that forbearance had been shown in vain. God is still as He revealed Himself in His Word and in His actual dealings with His people. It is utterly vain for us to frame for ourselves an ideal God in whose character the sternest justice has no place. II. That *we can sustain no relation to God which will render it safe for us to break His commandments, or exempt us from the consequences of wrong-doing* (ver. 25. Compare ver. 5; Amos iii. 2). III. That *all the forces of the universe are at God's disposal for the execution of His purposes.* Appalling is the variety of the scourges and swords that lie ready to His hand for the chastisement of the rebellious (β), and for the destruction of the incorrigible! IV. That *in addressing Himself to the work of judgment, God is moved by the highest moral considerations.* "Because they have cast away the *law* of the Lord of hosts, and despised the *word* of the Holy One of Israel: *therefore* is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people." In His wrath, as well as in His love, He is holy: in neither is there any caprice. V. That *consequently God will not pause in His work of judgment out of any weak regard to the mere sufferings of wrong-doers.* It is against sin that His anger burns, and while sin endures the fires of His wrath will continue to flame. Eternal punishment! For impenitent transgressors there is woe upon woe, and no severity of suffering that they may endure abates the anger of the Lord against them. There is

no such thing as salvation by personal suffering. See how all this is expressed in our text, from beginning to end.

GENERAL CONCLUSION.—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The history of the Jews since Israel's day is a terrible comment on this declaration.

PARTICULAR CONCLUSIONS.—1. As sinners, let us bestir ourselves to avert the consequences of our transgressions by a timely and genuine repentance (ch. lv. 6, 7; Hosea xiv. 1–4, &c.) 2. Having obtained mercy, let us be in the fear of the Lord all the day long (John v. 14). 3. For our guidance in life, let us keep constantly before us the Biblical presentation of God, as a God of justice and of mercy;—of justice, that we may be restrained from transgression; of mercy, that there may grow up in our hearts that love for Him which will cause us to find our highest joy in doing His will.

(α) See my *Homiletic Encyclopædia of Illustrations in Theology and Morals*, Nos. 2286–2301.

(β) As for example, *conscience*, the awakening of which Henry Smith has thus depicted: —"There is a warning conscience and a gnawing conscience. The warning comes before sin; the gnawing conscience follows after sin. The warning conscience is often lulled asleep, but the gnawing conscience wakes her again. If there be any hell in this world, they who feel the worm of conscience gnawing on their hearts may truly say that they have felt the torments of hell. Who can express that man's horror but himself? Nay, what horrors are those which he cannot express himself! Sorrows are met in his soul as at a feast; and fear, thought, and anguish divide the soul between them. All the furies of hell leap upon his heart like a stage. Thought calls to Fear; Fear whistles to Horror; Horror beckons to Despair, and says, Come, and help me to torment this sinner. One says that she comes from this sin, and another says that she comes from that sin. So he goes through a thousand deaths, and cannot die. Irons are laid upon his body like a prisoner. All his lights are put out at once. He has no soul fit to be comforted. Thus he lives as it were upon the rack, and says that he bears the world upon his shoulders, and that no man suffers that which he suffers. So let him lie, says God, without ease, until he confess and repent and call for mercy."

CORDS AND CART-ROPES.

v. 18. *Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope* (α).

There is a certain oddity and grotesqueness in these words as they stand. It disappears as soon as we perceive that we have here an instance of Hebrew parallelism. (Compare chap. i. 18.) "*Sin*" is a noun, not a verb, and is a synonym for iniquity; to sin men yoke themselves as it were with "cords of vanity" or as with "a cart-rope." "*Cords of vanity*" are such as have no substance in them, that will not stand any real strain; "a cart-rope" will stand an immense strain. Where, then, is the propriety of describing that by which the sinner binds himself to his sin by such opposite terms? In this, that in the first clause these bands are regarded from the point of view of a sound judgment, in the second from the point of view of the sinner's experience. Subjected to a real examination they are seen to be of no strength at all, and yet they suffice to bind the sinner to his sin as thoroughly as if they were strong as "a cart-rope."

What are these "cords of vanity"? They are false ideas—of God, of truth, of duty. This is plain from verse 19, which is an *explanation* of this one. There we have an illustrative case. Certain men are represented as bound to their iniquity by the false idea that God will not fulfil His threatenings against iniquity.

Our text furnishes the solution of a mystery which often perplexes us in daily life. We see men cleaving to ruinous iniquities, and cleaving to them in spite of the remonstrances and entreaties of their friends and of God's servants. We who have felt

"the powers of the world to come" wonder that men do not repent and believe, and so escape from "the wrath to come." Here is the explanation: they are bound to their ungodly practices as it were with a cart-rope; and yet they are thus enslaved by what, when rightly tested, are only cords of vanity. They are like a horse tied to a post by a bridle-rein: it could snap the rein in an instant, but it does not attempt to do so because it has no suspicion of the weakness of the rein. Look at some of the "cords of vanity" by which men are bound to their iniquities; the exposure of their essential weakness may excite some who are now fettered and bound to make an effort to attain to moral freedom.

I. One prevalent "cord of vanity" is *unbelief in God's threatenings against iniquity.* That God has threatened to do certain terrible things to impenitent sinners is admitted, but there lurks in the sinner's heart the idea that God is like certain foolish parents who threaten their children with punishments which they are much too good-natured ever to inflict. But whence did you derive this idea of God? Certainly not from *His Word.* He there distinctly forewarns us, that, though He is merciful and gracious, He will "by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. xxxiv. 7). Not from any intelligent examination of *His dealings in providence.* There neglect or infraction of law is invariably followed by punishment. If a whole nation were to neglect to sow its fields, would God be too good-natured to permit it to starve? But if God invariably punishes men for their infractions of His material laws, what reason can we have for hoping that He will not fulfil His threatenings against those who despise His spiritual ordinances? And why should we hope this? What reverence could we have for, what trust could we repose in, a God who did not fulfil His threatenings? How could we then trust in His promises? Surely this is a "cord of vanity!" and yet how many are bound by it as if it were "a cart-rope"!

II. Another cord is the reflection, "*We are no worse than others.*" Men compare themselves with others, perhaps even more iniquitous than themselves, and so arrive at the conclusion that they are not in any great danger. They do this even in temporal things, —*e.g.*, in the matter of drainage. The authorities of a country village or town will listen with the most complete indifference to the warnings of a Government inspector, that they are inviting an outbreak of fever or cholera; and the ground of their indifference is that they know of other villages or towns as badly drained as their own. But does *that* afford them any protection against the dangers of which they are warned? Men act as foolishly in spiritual matters. Because there are so many sinners they close their eyes to their own dangers or sins. Will God be either unable or afraid to punish transgressors because they are so numerous? Surely this also is a "cord of vanity;" and yet thousands are bound by it to their eternal destruction!

III. "*We shall be able to shake ourselves loose from our evil habits by and by.*" They imagine that they can repent and reform at any time, and they are firmly resolved to do so before death. Perhaps there could not be found a single sinner who does not secretly cherish in his breast wicked Balaam's desire, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" But this idea that men can repent and reform at any time is a delusion. As men continue in sin (1) *The power to reform decays.* (2) *The desire to reform dies out.* The love of sin takes entire possession of the man. It enwraps him as ivy unchecked will enwrap a tree; at first with no more strength than a child's finger, in the end with the strength of a thousand giants. It is the oldest sinners who cling to their vices most desperately, who are bound by them as by cart-ropes. (3.) *The opportunities for reform rapidly*

diminish and often end unexpectedly (Prov. xxix. 1; 1 Thess. v. 3).

Inquire by what cords of vanity *you* are bound. Break them! (Dan. iv. 27.) Look to Jesus, who came into the world for the very purpose of setting at liberty them that are bound.

(α) See Notes on pp. 121, 122.

The Prophet's Call.

vi. 1–13. *In the year that King Uzziah died, &c.*

We have here the history of Isaiah's call to his great life-work. Perhaps in a modern biography this chapter would have been placed first. But there was wisdom in placing it where it stands; it was well to give us some insight into the real character of the men among whom Isaiah was called to labour, for thus we are enabled more easily to understand the nature of the mission on which he was sent (α). Studying this chapter as a history of the prophet's call, I learn—

I. That a threefold spiritual preparation is needed for effective service of God (β). It is generally admitted that some kind of preparation is needed, *e.g.*, for the ministry of the Gospel; but it is not generally recognised that a merely professional preparation is of no avail whatever. A man may pass through the whole routine of college life, both literary and theological, and yet not be a prophet of the Lord. Such preparation is not merely not enough, it is not even essential. "Schools of the prophets" may exist without sending forth a single prophet, and God calls many prophets who have never been inside a school door. This is true of every kind and form of God's service, *e.g.*, the Sunday-school, the home, Christian literature. In every case a threefold spiritual preparation is necessary. Without it we may pretend to be God's servants; but the disguise will always be imperfect, and we shall always be betraying what we really are. Even the old blind Isaacs whom we deceive will not be sure about us: we may have on Esau's garments, but we shall never perfectly imitate Esau's voice. What, then, is this preparation? 1. *A vision of God.* Before we can serve God effectively, we must to some extent see Him as He is. In all departments of human activity, knowledge of the person served is essential to perfect service. Those who have never seen an earthly king cannot serve him as do those who are in daily intercourse with him; their loyalty is at the most a sentiment, not a constraining power. The biographies of God's most eminent servants in all ages make it plain that the first and indispensable stage in preparation for His service is a vision of God Himself—a revelation of His majesty and holiness (vers. 1–4). 2. What a man needs before he can effectively serve God is *a vision of himself.* The great hindrance to such service is self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency. But when a man really sees God as He is, he straightway sees himself as he is (ver. 5). Job's experience (Job. xlii. 5, 6). Peter's experience (Luke v. 8). He sees himself to be utterly unfit and unable to serve God, and so attains to the second indispensable qualification for such service (Eph. iii. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 9, &c.) 3. The third thing which a man needs before he can effectively serve God is *participation in God's salvation.* This is a rule that needs to be stated with wisdom. As a matter of fact, God has used the ministry of unconverted men. Such men may be guide-posts, though not guides. How much better to be a guide! How much more useful is a guide! But we cannot thus serve our generation unless we have been made a partaker of God's salvation. By a sanctifying process,—a process involving in some cases terrible pain (vers. 6, 7),—we must have been made "separate from sinners."

II. Those who have undergone this preparation will devote themselves unreservedly to God's service. 1. *There will spring up spontaneously within them a desire to serve God.* They will not need to be pressed into this service; they will volunteer (ver. 8). 2. *They will not be deterred by the difficulty or painfulness of the service to which they are called.* It was a hard and distasteful service that was demanded of Isaiah—to prophesy to an unbelieving and scoffing generation (ch. v. 18, 19); to enter upon a ministry that would leave men worse than it found them (vers. 9, 10). Nor was this ministry to be brief: it was to be prolonged through many years (vers. 11, 12). Note: in sending Isaiah on such a ministry there was nothing inconsistent with the Divine righteousness or goodness. God's truth must be proclaimed, whether men will heed or reject it; and the inevitable effect of such proclamation of the truth is to render those who reject it more stupid and wicked than they were before (2 Cor. ii. 16; John ix. 39). But, painful as it was, Isaiah did not shrink from it. Nor do any who have passed through such a preparation as his. They do not ask concerning a work or duty, "Is it easy?" "Is it pleasant?" but, "Does God call me to it?" Paul: (Acts xxi. 13).

III. There is great encouragement for those who have unreservedly devoted themselves to the service of God. I. *What God demands from them is not success, but faithfulness.* He did not require Isaiah to convert his fellow-countrymen, but to prophesy to them faithfully. There his responsibility began and ended. So is it with preachers, teachers, and priests to-day. Men measure by success, but God by faithfulness. What a difference is the result, *e.g.*, in such a case as that of Carey, who laboured for years without making one convert! or in such a case as Isaiah's! 2. *No faithful servant of God will ever labour without some success.* Isaiah was not to toil altogether in vain. There was to be a wide-spread apostacy of his countrymen, but not a universal apostacy; a small remnant would still cleave to the Lord (ver. 13); and doubtless Isaiah's ministry did much to keep them in the paths of righteousness. So is it with us; much of our seed may be wasted, but not all of it (Ps. cxxvi. 6; 1 Cor. xv. 58).

(α) This vision evidently contains the designation of Isaiah to his work as a prophet. It does not follow that he may not himself have put his book together in the form, or nearly in the form, in which we have received it. The early chapters as they describe the state of the people, not at one particular moment but through a course of years, announcing the punishments which must follow from that state with the blessings which could come out of them, are a living index to the subsequent prophecies and history. The place which they occupy, supposing it was assigned by Isaiah, cannot hinder us from accepting his own express words as a proof, that the year in which King Uzziah died was the critical year of his life, that which explained to him why he was sent into the world and what task he had to perform in it.—*F. D. Maurice.*

(β) Once for all must he who was to be a prophet have become absolutely certain of the true relation of the world and Jehovah,—must have beheld, as in a distinct form, the sublime and holy character of Jehovah, and felt that he was directed by Him alone; once for all must he have recognised the divine power of truth against the whole world, and himself as living and moving in it alone; once for all must he have entered, with the effectual energy and act of his whole inner being, into the counsels of God, and found himself for ever bound by them, and endowed by these bonds with true power and freedom:—this was the first condition and the true beginning of all the work of the prophet, the holy consecration and the inner call, without which none can become a true prophet.—*Ewald.*

The Trinity in Unity.

(For Trinity Sunday.)

vi. 1–3. *In the year that King Uzziah died, &c.*

Scene of this sublime vision, the Temple; *time*, "the year that King Uzziah died." Why is this fact mentioned? Uzziah had profaned the

Temple (2 Chron. xxvi. 16–21); his son and successor was Jotham, the only king of the house of Judah whose character has not one dishonouring blot; was it not appropriate that, when the disobedient king was removed, and a king who honoured God and His house had succeeded him, there should have been this glorious revelation of the King of kings—not merely as a preparation of the prophet for his mission, but as an encouragement to the monarch to persevere in his loyalty towards God and His truth?

That which was granted to the prophet was *a vision of the Triune God.* Proofs: ver. 3, which shows the plurality of persons in the Divine unity; John xii. 41, where it is asserted that that which the prophet saw was the glory of Christ; Acts xxviii. 25, where it is asserted that the voice which the prophet heard was the voice of the Holy Ghost; ver. 3, the threefold repetition of "holy." I purpose, therefore, to make some observations on this important subject of the Trinity.

I. The doctrine of the Trinity has been believed by the Church of Christ in all ages. This is at least a presumption that it is taught in Scripture, successive generations of devout men could scarcely have been mistaken on such a vital point.

II. This doctrine of the Trinity underlies the whole Bible, and is inextricably interwoven with its fabric and structure. The Old Testament testifies to the Divine unity, as contrasted with the polytheism which prevailed among heathen nations; the Gospels record the manifestation of the Incarnate Son of God; the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles set forth the work of the Third Person in the Church. There is direct testimony to this doctrine, such as Matt. xxviii. 19, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. But just as circumstantial evidence when it is clear and complete is even more satisfactory and decisive than the very best direct testimony, still more valuable is the indirect testimony to this doctrine underlying the whole Bible; like a threefold cord, it runs through the whole book, and binds the whole of Divine revelation together.

III. This doctrine of the Trinity, while it is clearly taught in Scripture, is mysterious and inexplicable. We can no more comprehend it with the unaided human understanding than by uplifting the fingers we can touch the starry firmament (*α*). This is no reason for refusing to accept it (*β*), for we accept many other facts which we cannot explain (we cannot explain even the familiar fact of *sight*), but it is a reason for not insisting dogmatically that other men should accept our explanations of it.

As we cannot stay to consider the effect of this vision upon the mind of the prophet, I shall conclude with just three words of practical application of the doctrine itself. 1. *It is bound up with our duty to God.* We are bound to accept it, because He has revealed it; and accepting it, we are bound to yield to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost the homage and love of our souls. 2. *It is bound up with our hope of salvation.* If it is not true that the Everlasting Son came forth from the bosom of the Father, and took upon Him to deliver man; and if it is not true that the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son raises men from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and restamps upon their souls the lost lineaments of our Maker's image, what foundation is there left for our hope of everlasting life? 3. *It is bound up with the fulness of the Gospel blessings.* These are all summed up in the Apostolic benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. If *these* be ours, we "have all and abound."—*R. W. Forrest* (*Christian World Pulpit*, i. 492).

(*α*, *β*) See Article: THE TRINITY, in my *Homiletic Encyclopædia of Illustrations*, and section 1501 in my *Dictionary of Poetical Illustrations.*

Revelations of God.

vi. 1–5. *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw, &c.* (α).

I. Earthly powers fade and perish, but the Eternal Power that uses them all lives on (ver. 1). Comfort here, when a great king or statesman is taken away from the head of a nation; when a great leader of an arduous reformatory movement, such as Luther, is laid low; when an eloquent preacher or wise pastor is summoned to his rest; or even when the head of a household is cut off just when his family most need his care. He who has wrought by their instrumentality can work without it (Ps. lxviii. 5, &c.) II. In God's temples there is room only for God. "His train filled the Temple." Ahaz could build in the courts of the Lord's house an altar to the god of Damascus (2 Kings xvi. 10–16), but he could not worship two gods there, for the only living and true God departed when His sanctuary was thus profaned. God will have all, or none (Isa. xlii. 8) All His earthly temples must be counterparts of the one heavenly temple, where He reigns alone. In no church will God divide His empire with the State or with popular opinion: we *must* choose between Him and all other authorities. In no heart will He reign along with any other principle or passion (Matt. vi. 24.) III. Until we reach the land where there is no temple, we cannot see God as He is (β). To Isaiah a vision of God was granted, and yet it was but a symbolic vision. He saw a throne, and on it seated a Being of indescribable majesty; but who imagines that he saw God as He is? Does God sit on a throne, after the fashion of kings, such as Uzziah, who fade and die? The vision was a condescension to the human faculties of the seer, and served its purpose, that of impressing upon him the majesty and holiness of the Most High. And he tells us more of the ministers who surround the throne than of its Occupant! Him no words can describe; of Him no absolute disclosure is now possible; He can but give us revelations—visions—administrations of Himself. And this He has done. 1. *In nature.* The purpose of the manifold and wondrous universe is not accomplished if we look only at the creation, and do not discern in it veils not thickly hiding, but helping to reveal the Creator (Rom. i. 19, 20) (γ). 2. *In Providence.* The manner in which the world is governed is, to the man who studies it comprehensively, earnestly, and reverently, a revelation of the character of the Ruler. 3. *In His Word.* That man miserably mistakes, who studies the Bible as anything less than a many-sided disclosure of God. 4. *In Christ* (δ): a familiar thought this, yet how seldom do we enter into its depths! We do not worship an unknown God, yet we cannot see Him as He is until we have entered into that light which is inaccessible and which no mortal can approach unto, until we have been ourselves transformed into "children of light," and so rendered capable of looking on "the Father of lights." IV. Those to whom He reveals Himself most fully are most humble, and those whom He most exalts are most ready to serve. We have both these truths illustrated in the seraphim and in Isaiah.

(α) The scene of the Vision is the Temple; and its features will have been the same whether we suppose them to have risen before Isaiah's imagination while he was absent from the spot, in the solitude of his chamber or his house-top, or assume (as I myself prefer to do), that he was actually praying in the Temple at the time.

Though it is unlikely that any of the successors to what was but a small remnant of Solomon's kingdom perfectly restored the Temple after it was deprived of its original splendour by Shishak in the reign of Rehoboam, yet we see the worthier princes from time to time repairing the structure when it had been suffered to fall into decay, and replacing, as far as they could, the treasures and the costly decorations of which it was repeatedly despoiled to buy off foreign invaders; and probably there was no period in which the restoration would be more complete than in the reign of Uzziah, who in his power, wealth, and magnificence, came nearer than any other to Solomon. And there will be much more of fact than of fancy in the picture, if, for the clearer understanding of the scene of this vision, we

figure to ourselves the youthful prophet in his rough hair or woollen garment (probably not unlike that of the Capuchin friar as we now see him in the streets or churches of Rome), going up to the Temple to worship;—and if we look with him at the Temple as, at the end of 300 years from its building, it must have presented itself to his eyes, with its ample courts, and colonnades, and porch, and its holy house, and holy of holies, well-proportioned, and of the most elaborate workmanship, though rather massive than large according to our notions. As he crossed the variegated pavement of "the great court of the congregation," and stopped—for we have no reason to suppose him a Levite—at the entrance to the inner, or "priests'" court, on each hand would rise one of the tall pillars which Solomon set up in token that the kingdom was constituted by Jehovah, and would be upheld by His might (1 Kings vii. 21; 2 Chron. iii. 17), and which, once of "bright brass," but now mellowed into bronze, had their square capitals richly wreathed with molten lilies, chain-work, and pomegranates; before him, resting on the back of the twelve oxen, and cast like them in brass, would appear the "molten sea," a basin of thirty cubits in circumference, and containing two or three thousand *baths* of water, its, brim wrought "like the brim of a cup with flowers of lilies," and under these a double row of ornamental knobs; while on each side stood five smaller lavers, the bases of which rested on wheels, and were most elaborately ornamented with oxen, lions, cherubims, and palm-trees engraved upon them; and beyond these again he would see the great brazen altar of burnt-offering, with its never-extinguished fire; and overhead the roof of thick cedar beams resting on rows of columns. These were the courts of the palace of the divine King of Israel, for the reception of His subjects and His ministers. [Compare the description of Solomon's own house, which besides its inner porch had another where he sat to judge the people, 1 Kings vii. 7. The arrangement of the Temple is plainly that of a palace.] The house itself again consisted of two parts, the outer of which, the holy place, was accessible to those priests who were in immediate attendance on their unseen Sovereign, while the inner, or holiest place, was the very presence-chamber of the Monarch who dwelt "between the cherubims," which spread their golden wings over the ark containing the covenant He had vouchsafed to enter into with His people, and itself forming a "mercy-seat," where was "the place of His throne and the place of the sole of His feet." In the position which I have, following the requirements of the narrative in the chapter before us, supposed Isaiah to be placed, he would see through the open folding-doors of cypress, carved "with cherubims, and palm-trees, and open flowers," and "covered with gold upon the carved work," into the holy place, which he could not enter; and the light of the golden lamps on either side would show him the cedar panelling of the walls, carved with knobs and open flowers, with cherubims and palm-trees, festooned with chain-work, and richly gilt; the mosaics of precious stone; the cypress floor; the altar of incense; the table with the shew-bread; the censers, tongs, and other furniture of "pure and perfect gold;" and before the doorway at the further end, and not concealed by the open leaves of the olive-wood doors (carved and gilded like the others), would be distinguishable the folds of the vail "of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen," embroidered with cherubims. In the East the closed vail, or *purdah*, declares the presence and secures the privacy of the monarch, into which no man may intrude and live; and in the Temple at Jerusalem it was the symbol of the awful presence and unapproachable majesty of the King Jehovah, Lord of hosts. . . . Perhaps on this occasion, or certainly on many others, Isaiah had been joining in the public daily sacrifice and worship, and had afterwards brought his own free-will offering—a bullock or a lamb without blemish. Such an offering, the symbol of his dedication of himself to Jehovah's service, would be the natural expression of his earnest desire for some token that at last it was permitted him to enter on the actual functions of the prophetic office for which he had been so long preparing; and that this vision was the answer to such beautiful prayerful desire—itself an inspiration from on high—we may well believe.—*Strachey.*

Some of you may have been watching a near and beautiful landscape in the land of mountains and eternal snows, till you have been exhausted by its very richness, and till the distant hills which bounded it have seemed, you knew not why, to limit and contract the view,—and then a vail has been withdrawn, and new hills not looking as if they belonged to this earth, yet giving another character to all that does belong to it, have unfolded themselves before you. This is an imperfect, very imperfect, likeness (yet it is one), of that revelation which must have been made to the inner eye of the prophet, when he saw another throne than the throne of the house of David, another king than Uzziah or Jotham, another train than that of priests or minstrels in the Temple, other winged forms than those golden ones which overshadowed the mercy-seat. Each object was the counterpart of one that was then or had been at some time before his bodily eyes. . . . The symbols and service of the Temple were not, as priests and people often thought, an earthly machinery for scaling a distant Heaven; they were witnesses of a Heaven nigh at hand, of a God dwelling in the midst of His people, of His being surrounded by spirits which do His pleasure, hearkening to the voice of His words. —*F. D. Maurice.*

(β) See my *Dictionary of Poetical Illustrations*, No. 1501; and my *Homiletic Encyclopædia of Illustrations*, Nos. 2229–2240.

(γ) D. P. I., 1489, 1493, 1496, 1502, 1504–1506, 1508, 1509, 1511, 1514, 1519, 1526, 2545, 2552, 2563; H. E. I., 2242.

(δ) H. E. I., 854–857, 2241, 2243.

Isaiah's Vision.

vi. 1–7. *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord, &c.* (α).

Behold, in these temple scenes, both what the Lord your God is, and what He requires from you.

I. The first of these temple scenes presents to our view **the majesty of God**: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up." One of the first and most important truths for us to learn is the absolute rule of God—over nature, man, the principalities of heaven. Mark the scenic circumstances. He sitteth upon His throne: this is the attitude, 1. Of *supremacy and dignity;* He sitteth while all other beings stand before Him to receive His commands, bow in adoration, or are prostrate in abasement. 2. It is the attitude of *ease and perfect security* (β). But, above all, mark the place of His throne as displayed in this wonderful vision. It stands in the temple; it has been sprinkled with the blood of propitiation; it is *now* the mercy-seat. To the truly penitent all its terror appears softened with grace.

II. The second of these temple scenes displays to us **the ineffable and incomprehensible nature of God.** Let not man suppose that he can by searching find out God, or know the Almighty unto perfection. This is scenically, but most impressively, represented to us in the vision before us: "His train"—the skirts of the shekinah—"filled the temple," its fainter rays beaming from the central blaze in the holiest of all, and irradiating the more distant objects. But even that was too much for man, and it is therefore added, "And the house was filled with smoke;" a veil was thus drawn over what was too bright and dazzling for mortal vision; and though God dwelt in the light, yet it was light involving itself in thick darkness (Ps. xcvii. 2; Ex. xvi. 10). Revelation has not superseded mystery (Job xxvi. 14). As to His dispensations, we are all still to walk by faith rather than by sight; and as to the depths of His nature, rather to adore than reason. An infinite being is necessarily incomprehensible by finite beings (γ); He must be mysterious. If we could fully know God, we must either be equal to Him, or He must lose the glory of His nature and come down to ourselves (1 Cor. xiii. 9; Rom. xi. 33).

III. The third view presented by this vision is that of **the adorable and awful holiness of God** (ver. 3). This is seen in His titles (Ps. lxxi. 22; Deut. xxxii. 4); in His acts; in His law; in His visible image on earth, His Son incarnate; in His Gospel; in His judgments; in the reward of the righteous.

IV. In the next scene which the vision presents we behold **a sinful man convicted and laid prostrate before this holy God** (ver. 5).

V. In the final scene we behold **a convicted, self-abased, and penitent man pardoned and consecrated to the service of God** (vers. 6, 7). What are we taught by this wondrous representation? That for guilty man there is pardon, that for unholy men there is purification, and that lips, once unclean, but now sanctified, may join in the hymns of seraphim, and, without dread, approach to God, and celebrate the glories even of His holiness. This we are taught, but not this only; not merely is the fact, but the manner of it, brought before us. See, then, the means. The instrument of purification is fire; but not any kind of fire, fire from any place; it is fire from the altar, the altar where atonement is made for sin; fire, therefore, both of divine origin, and coming to us through the great Propitiation. We can be at no loss for an interpretation of the symbols thus employed. Our altar is the cross; the propitiatory sacrifice, the spotless Lamb of God; by the merit of His death, and the baptizing fire of His Spirit, are the

guilty and polluted pardoned and sanctified to God.—*Richard Watson: Works*, vol. iv. pp. 143–153.

(α) God is invisible; yet in that heavenly world in which He has His special and eternal residence He manifests Himself in ineffable glory, dwelling in what the Scriptures call "the light which no man can approach unto." Of that heavenly world, the tabernacle and temple were splendid emblems; they were "patterns of heavenly things." But why the astonishing fact, that when sinful creatures erected a tent in the wilderness, and a temple subsequently at Jerusalem, the visible glory of God descended, taking possession of the place? God thus came down from heaven to earth, with all these impressive circumstances of visible majesty, to teach His creatures that He was awfully glorious, and fearful even in His praises; that even in His acts of grace His holiness is solemnly declared; and thus to show with what reverence and purity man ought to approach to Him. So when Isaiah was to be appointed to an office in which he was to fear God, and not the face of man, and which, to give it weight and authority, required an entire sanctity, a scene similar to that which had been displayed in the temple at its consecration, but greatly heightened and magnified, was disclosed to him in vision. The space of this visionary temple appears to have been far more ample than that of the one at Jerusalem; the throne was greatly elevated, it was "high, and lifted up;" the "train," the "skirts" (as in the margin) of the cloud of the Divine presence filled the whole place; instead of the carved representations of the cherubim of glory fixed on the mercy-seat, the prophet beholds the cherubim themselves, living, and all ardour, activity, and adoration; they are not represented in the vision as the cherubim in the holiest of all, silently gazing on the glory of God and the mysteries of His covenant, but as hymning His praises, proclaiming His spotless purity, and declaring "the whole earth to be full of His glory." The prophet, beholding the wondrous scene, sinks oppressed and self-abhorred, until a coal from the altar touches his lips, and he is thus sanctified to the service of God, and put among His ministers.—*Watson.*

(β) No rebellions shake the throne of God; though "the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," yet "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." The throne of God is a rock in the midst of the ever-rolling ocean of created existence, that heaves and swells with ceaseless change; but, in comparison of Him, its mightiest billows have but their moment of existence, and sink into the mass at the base of the immovable throne of the Everlasting One.—*Watson.*

(γ) An observer on a mountain-cliff may be able to survey the whole circumference of a lake that lies beneath him, but no man can see the whole of the ocean, simply because it is the ocean, and not a lake.—*Watson.*

The Seraphim.

vi. 2. *Above it stood the seraphim* (α): *each had six wings, &c.*

I. "*With twain he covered his face*" (β). They bow with prostrate awe, veiling themselves in the presence of the Divine glory, as though feeling the force of those strong words, "He chargeth His angels with folly, and the heavens are not clean in His sight." If the angels tremble while they gaze, what should man feel? II. "*With twain he covered his feet*" (γ). Among Orientals this expresses reverence. Well may *you* bow in reverence before Him! The sense of pardon will humble you, even while it fills you with holy exaltation. III. "*With twain he did fly*"—in readiness to execute His commands.—*Richard Watson: Works*, vol. ix. pp. 150–153.

(α) As those that are nearest of a king's attendants stand behind his throne or chair of state, at his elbow.—*Day.*

This is the only passage of Scripture in which the seraphim are mentioned. According to the orthodox view, which originated with Dionysius the Areopagite, they stand at the head of the nine choirs of angels, the first rank consisting of *seraphim*, *cherubim*, and *throni*. And this is not without support, if we compare the cherubim mentioned in Ezekiel, which carried the chariot of the divine throne; whereas here the seraphim are said to surround the seat on which the Lord worshipped. In any case, the seraphim and cherubim were heavenly beings of different kinds; and there is no weight in the attempts of Hendewerk and Stickel to prove that they are one and the same. And certainly the name *seraphim* does not signify merely spirits as such, but even, if not the highest of all, yet a distinct order from the rest; for the Scriptures really teach that there are gradations in rank in the hierarchy of heaven. Nor were they mere symbols or fanciful images, as Hävernick imagines, but real spiritual beings, who visibly appeared to the prophet, and that in a form corresponding to their own supersensuous being, and to the design of the whole transaction. Whilst the

seraphim hovered on both sides of Him that sat upon the throne, and therefore formed two opposite choirs, each ranged in a semicircle, they presented antiphonal worship to Him that sat upon the throne.—*Delitzsch.*

The cherubim in the temple represented no doubt spiritual powers and presence in the most general sense, those who look upon God and reflect His light. If we distinguish between them and the cherubim, as we do in our "Te Deum," these last would seem more especially to represent those divine energies and affections of which the zeal, devotion, and sympathy of man are counterparts.—*F. D. Maurice.*

The name cannot possibly be connected with *sârâph*, a snake (Sanscrit, *sarpa*, Latin, *Serpens*); and to trace the word to a verb *sâraph* in the sense of the Arabic '*sarafa* ('*sarufa*), to tower high, to be exalted, or highly honoured (as Gesenius, Hengstenberg, and others have done), yields a sense that does not very strongly commend itself. On the other hand, to follow Knobel, who reads *shârâthim*, worshippers of God), and thus presents the Lexicon with a new word, and to pronounce the word *seraphim* a copyist's error, would be a rash concession to the heaven-storming omnipotence which is supposed to reside in the ink of a German scholar. It is hardly admissible, however, to interpret the name as signifying directly spirits of light or fire, since the true meaning of *sâraph* is not *urere* (to burn), but *comburere* (to set on fire or burn up). Umbreit endeavours to do justice to this transitive meaning by adopting the explanation "fiery beings," by which all earthly corruption is opposed and destroyed. The vision itself, however, appears to point to a much more distinctive and special meaning in the name, which only occurs in this passage of Isaiah. . . . If the fact that a seraph absolved the seer by means of this fire of love (vers. 6, 7) is to be taken as an illustrative example of the historical calling of the seraphim, they were the vehicles and media of the fire of divine love, just as the cherubim in Ezekiel are vehicles and media of the fire of divine wrath. For just as in the case before us, a seraph takes the fire of love from the alter; so there, in Ezek. x. 6, 7, a cherub takes the fire of wrath from the throne-chariot. Consequently the cherubim appear as the vehicles and media of the wrath which destroys sinners, or rather of the divine *doxa*, with its fiery side turned towards the world; and the seraphim as the vehicles and media of the love which destroys sin, or of the same divine *doxa* with its light side towards the world. . . . "Seraphic love" is the expression used in the language of the Church to denote the *ne plus ultra* of holy love in the creature. —*Delitzsch.*

(β) Thus expressing his profound reverence and becoming modesty in the Divine presence. We can hardly approach those who are greatly our superiors but with downcast eyes, intimating the consciousness we feel of their pre-eminence, and our profound respect for their excellency and dignity. We cannot look at the sun shining with meridian splendour, but we are obliged to cover our eyes with our hands. Such is the infinite glory of the eternal Jehovah, that celestial spirits around His throne appeared to our prophet covering their faces with their wings. Light inaccessible and full of glory, in which God resides, was too strong for them directly to contemplate.—*Macculloch.*

(γ) In Scripture language the *feet* sometimes denote all the lower parts of the body which decency requires to be concealed. In eastern countries these were generally covered by the long garments which they were accustomed to wear: hence it may have been thought want of respect to appear in public, on solemn occasions, with the feet uncovered.—*Macculloch.*

In a similar description of the cherubim in Ezek. i. 11, it is said that they covered *their bodies*. In Isaiah the expression clearly denotes, not the feet only, but the lower extremities.—*Barnes.*

How little do we know of beings whose forms from their faces to their feet are 'covered!'—*B. W. Newton.*

A Glorious Example.

vi. 2. *Above it stood the seraphim, &c.*

The seraphim afford us a model for imitation. Our Lord has animated us in our Christian course by promising that, if we are faithful, we shall be made like the angels in heaven; but if we would hereafter resemble them in glory, we must first resemble them here in temper. Let us, therefore, prepare in time to join the concert of these holy intelligences. I. They burn with love to God. The honourable name they bear is derived from a word signifying to burn, and denotes the fervour of that zeal for the interests of their Lord by which they are animated. II. Notwithstanding their vast endowments, they bend with reverence and humility before the throne of the Lord. III. They fly with rapidity to execute His commands.—*Henry Kollock, D D.: Sermons*, pp. 585, 586.

THE SERAPHIM AND THEIR SONG.

vi. 2–4. *And above it stood the seraphim, &c.*

I. THE SERAPHIM.—The Scriptures disclose to us the fact that there is a spiritual world, vast and variously populated, superior to this world, yet connected with it and exerting upon it powerful influences. Little beyond the *fact* is made known to us; few details are granted us; yet glimpses into it have been vouchsafed, and among the most interesting and instructive of them is our text.

Only here do we read of *seraphim:* elsewhere we read of *cherubim* (Gen. iii. 24; Ezek. x. 1–22, &c.); and of *living ones* (Rev. iv. 6–8). From the fact that these "living ones" in some respects resemble both the "seraphim" of Isaiah and the "cherubim" of Ezekiel, some eminent scholars believe these are three names for one order of beings. Others, with whom we are disposed to sympathise, believe that the two names "cherubim" and "seraphim" really indicate two orders of spiritual intelligences, resembling each other, yet distinct. Whether the "living ones" of the Apocalypse are cherubim, or seraphim, or a third order of exalted ministers of the Most High, is a question concerning which we cannot speak confidently.

Scholars also are divided as to the significance of the name "seraphim:" some derive the word from a root signifying *to burn*, others from a root signifying *to be exalted.*

But there can be no question that the descriptions of the "seraphim," the "cherubim," and the "living ones" are symbolical; the terms employed are figures adapted to convey to our minds true descriptions of beings of whom a literal description would now be unintelligible by us (α). "*Wings*" are symbols of swiftness (β): here the symbol is triplicated to indicate the exceeded swiftness — the immense energy—of these messengers of God (Ps. civ. 4). "*With twain he covered his face,*" in token of humility. "*With twain he covered his feet,*" in token of reverence. "*With twain he did fly,*" in token of readiness to do God's will—three points in which we should strive evermore to resemble these exalted intelligences.

To them is granted an immediate vision of God, and the effect upon them is expressed by their song: "*Holy,*" &c.

II. Consider next THIS SONG OF THE SERAPHIM. **1. They acknowledge God as "the Lord of hosts."** (γ) This term in its first use in human language referred to the sun, moon, and stars (Gen. ii. 1; Neh. ix. 6, &c.). Thus considered, how wonderful are the conceptions which are opened out to us of the Divine power and glory! (Isa. xi. 26.) But it includes also those thousands of thousands of exalted intelligences who hearken to His word and do His pleasure. "A great King" is the Lord our God! **2. They teach us that the glory of God is co-extensive with His works.** All that Isaiah saw was that God's glory filled the temple: what they saw was that His glory filled the earth. "*The whole earth,*" *&c.* 1. This declaration is true, if we think of Him *as the God of nature.* Everything that He has made is "good." Even a snowflake shows forth His glory. Science is a servant of God, and is teaching us to understand somewhat of the wondrousness and beneficence of His works. 2. It is true if we think of Him *as the God of providence.* Human history, comprehensively and thoughtfully considered, shows that, while men are free, they are yet under the control of One who rules over all in the interests of righteousness and truth (Ps. lxxvi. 10; Isa. x. 5–7, &c.). To angelic intelligences how profoundly interesting must be the problems which God is working out in the government of this world! (Rev. xv. 3.) 3. It is true even if we think of Him *as the God of*

redemption. Possibly (though perhaps not probably) this earth is the only sphere in which His glory in this respect is manifested. But here it is manifested in the mission and work of His Son (Eph. iii. 10). Even where the Gospel has not yet been proclaimed there are senses in which His glory as the God of redemption is manifested: even there, for Christ's sake, He is patient with sinners, He strives with them by His Spirit, He is preparing them for the future triumphs of the Cross. The history of our race, when it shall be seen as a whole, will all redound to His glory as the God of redemption (δ). 3. In the holiness of God the seraphim find the supreme subject for adoration and song: *Holy*, &c. Other attributes of the Most High are the themes of their thought and worship, but it is His holiness that excites their most rapturous praise. Why? 1. *They have never needed His mercy;* it is reserved for *us* to sing the sweet song of redeeming grace. On account of our redemption they rejoice (Luke xv. 10), but doubtless they rejoice in it most because the mercy shown us is a holy mercy; it was so shown as to solve some of the profoundest moral problems, and so as to leave untouched the principle of righteousness on which God's throne eternally abides (Rom. iii. 26). Not having needed that mercy themselves, it is natural that they should rather magnify the holiness which has been shown in it and which is the need of all. 2. *It is the holiness of God that gives value to all His other attributes.* They are valuable only because they are directed by unswerving holiness. The holiness of God is the foundation of the peace, the joy, and the love of the moral universe. Were God not holy, even hell itself would be a more awful abode; for then to all its other woes would be added the possibility of suffering inflicted in mere vindictiveness. We also are called to join in the song of the seraphim (Ps. xxx. 4, xcvii. 12): let us beseech Him so to sanctify us by His Spirit, that in our lips the song may not be a sacrilege!

III. THE EFFECTS OF THE SONG. 1. "*The posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that cried*" (ε). A symbol this of the constant effects of the proclamation of truth. At every new announcement of it earthly things that seem most solid shake, and many of them totter and fall and disappear (2 Cor. x. 4; Heb. xii. 26–28). 2. *And the house was filled with smoke.* In response to the worship of the seraphim the temple became so completely filled with the Divine glory that the radiance overpowered the prophet's vision. What he calls "smoke" was excess of light (1 Kings viii. 10–12; Rev. xv. 8) (ζ). So would it be with us were our craving for a fuller manifestation of God in His works and word granted. We have as much light now as we can bear. A fuller revelation would only dazzle, confuse, and blind us. The time is to come when we shall see God "as He is," but this will then be possible, because "we shall be like Him;" and that time is not yet!

(α) "*Above the throne stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings. With twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.*" The sense of awe increasing with the clearness and purity of a spirit and with the nearness of its approach to God; the face being veiled which receives its light from Him, and most covets to behold Him; the absence of all wish to display their own perfection in spirits who are perfect; the freedom and willingness to go anywhere, to do any errands of mercy; these are some of the more obvious thoughts which the study of this vision suggests. There are others which lie hidden, which we may have a glimpse of from time to time, and which words might mar. For it is true of earthly symbols, still more of heavenly visions, that they are meant to carry us out of words and above words. —*F. D. Maurice.*

(β) Among the ancients, *Mercury*, the messenger of Jupiter, was always represented with wings.—*Barnes.*

(γ) This title of Jehovah, with some variations, is found upwards of 260 times in the Old Testament. The meaning of the word *hosts* is doubtless the same as that of *army* in Dan. iv. 35, and includes all the myriads of holy angels who people the celestial spheres, as in 1 Kings xxii. 19 the Host of Heaven were seen by Micaiah standing round the throne of God. So in Ps. ciii. 21, cxlviii. 2, the Hosts of God are His angels. (Comp. Deut. xxxiii. 2.)

By a slight metonymy, or may be in a slightly different sense, *the Host of Heaven* designates the heavenly spheres themselves (Gen. ii. 1; Deut. iv. 19, xvii. 3; Isa. xxxiv. 4, &c.). It is probably with reference to the idolatrous worship of the Host of Heaven that the title of *the Lord of hosts* was given to the true God, as asserting His universal supremacy. (See Neh. ix. 6.) In the New Testament the phrase occurs only once, James v. 4, *the Lord of Sabaoth*. In Rom. ix. 29, it is a quotation from Isaiah.—*Professor Rawlinson.*

(δ) Sin has already served, as all things must, to bring into view more clearly the glory of God, for had there been no sin there could have been no mercy; and in its punishment, its overthrow, and its extirpation, His glory will be yet more signally displayed. Hercules could never have been deified, if there had been no monsters to overcome. True is the seraph's song even now, but it shall be more manifestly and gloriously true in that day, so surely and swiftly drawing nigh, when Christ shall have subdued all enemies unto Him, and God shall be All in all.—*R. A. B.*

The vision reaches its highest point in the cry, *Holy, holy, holy!* It is the holiness of God which the seraphim proclaim, that which cannot be represented to the eye, that of which descriptions and symbols furnish no image. It is that holiness which fills not the heaven of heavens only but the whole earth, *seeing that was made very good, seeing that in its order and constitution it was still perfectly good*, though men defiled it by their deeds, though the habitations of cruelty were set up in the midst of it.—*F. D. Maurice.*

(ε) The voice of the seraphim at this time was so loud and melodious, and the power of their heavenly music was so great, when extolling the holiness and glory of Jehovah, that the posts, with the lintel of the door of the temple, seemed to tremble, to be shaken in the place where they stood, or loosed from their place. This was a very surprising effect (though seen only in vision), for these posts were so large and strong, that they supported gates of brass which are said to have required twenty men to shut them, on account of their ponderous weight.—*Macculloch.*

(ζ) *Delitzsch* thus gives the usual interpretation of this clause: *The house was filled with smoke.* Many compare this with the similar occurrence in connection with the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings viii. 10); but Drechsler is correct in stating that the two cases are not parallel, for there God simply attested His own presence by the cloud of smoke behind which He concealed Himself, whereas here there was no need of any such self-attestation. Moreover, in this instance God does not dwell in the cloud and thick darkness, whilst the smoke is represented as the effect of the songs of praise in which the seraphim have joined, and not of the presence of God. The smoke arose from the altar of incense mentioned in verse 6. But when Drechsler says that it was the prayers of *saints* (as in Rev. v. 8, viii. 3, 4), which ascended to the Lord in the smoke, this is a thought which is quite out of place here. The smoke was the immediate consequence of the seraph's song of praise.

A Sight of God and a Sense of Sin.

vi. 5–7. *Then said I, &c.*

Visions of the throne of God were given to Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel among the prophets, and to John among the Apostles (α). I. The distinguished privilege. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." "Mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." The invisible and unapproachable God revealed Himself to the bewildered seer through the glory of the afterwards incarnate Christ (John xii. 41). May we behold God? Certainly we may. 1. *In His Son Jesus Christ* (Heb. i. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15; John xiv. 8, 9). 2. *In His works and Word.* The works are the embodied words of God. In the Scriptures we may see the mind, the heart, the purposes, the character of God. 3. *In His sanctuary.* In the act of worship, while in the temple, Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord (Ps. lxiii. 1, 2, lxviii. 24). II. The profound abasement. It is true that "before honour is humility." The converse is also true. Isaiah's humility was the effect of overwhelming honour. A sight of God brought self-revelation; depravity was revealed by the dazzling whiteness of divine purity. 1. *There was consternation.* "Woe is me; for I am undone." 2. *There was self-loathing.* "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." The vision of God results in a vivid and painful sense of sin (Job xlii. 5, 6; Luke v. 8). III. The divine cleansing. Absolution is connected with confession (1 John i. 9). 1. *The cleans-*

ing was efficacious. 2. *The purification was by means of sacrifice.* 3. *The removal of defilement was immediate.* A man so prepared is made ready for any ministry of testimony, toil, or tribulation.—*Matthew Braithwaite.*

(α) "We should naturally expect that a vision vouchsafed to an Apostle of Christ, at the end of the first century of the Christian era, would be larger in scope, brighter in glory, less enigmatical in structure, in significance, than those which were attached to the ministrations of prophets. This expectation is not disappointed. We find the visions of the throne of God which prophets saw revived and incorporated in the Apostle's vision, and we find the Christian seer enlightened with a more distinct understanding of the heavenly symbols. *Isaiah* saw the throne of God in the temple, surrounded by seraphim, "crying one to another, Holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." *Ezekiel*, sitting by the river of Chebar, saw the throne of God as a chariot of war coming out of a whirlwind and going forth over the earth, attended by mighty ministers of judgment, carrying the Son of Man to victory. *Daniel* beheld the great session of justice; the gathered myriads before the awful purity of the Divine Judge; the consuming laws executed by the faithful servants. But the Christian *Apostle*, looking through the door of heaven, beheld all these ancient visions, which had come down through eight centuries of time, blended into one. He saw Isaiah's seraphim, but they had the appearance of Ezekiel's living creatures, with fourfold countenance; their wings were still visible, and their voices still responded, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" He saw the thrones round about *the Throne*, as Daniel saw them, but he was able to count them; they were four and twenty; and upon the seats he "saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold." The stream of fire, which the prophet saw proceeding from under the throne, was now "a sea of glass like unto crystal." He that sat on the throne, who appeared to Ezekiel as though He were clothed with fiery amber, was "to look upon like a jasper and sardine stone;" and the rainbow was still there, "round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." "Lightnings, thunderings, and voices" proceeded out of the throne, as before fire flamed out and devoured. "The seven spirits of God," like "burning lamps of fire," stand in the presence of the Holy One. And the Apostle witnessed the sublime service of heaven, the living creatures "giving glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne;" and, in response to their worship, "the four and twenty elders falling down before Him and worshipping Him," and singing their united praises, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created!"—*R. A. Redford.*

Volunteer Service.

vi. 8. *Then said I, Here am I, send me.*

This is a chapter of autobiography. Here is disclosed the secret of the wonderful energy with which for more than half a century Isaiah prosecuted his ministry. He is the Paul of the Old Testament. Allowance being made for difference of phraseology, there is a striking resemblance between the call of Isaiah and of Paul (comp. chap. vi. with Acts ix.). Both sought to serve the heavenly King; and both received a commission to work, spiritual and catholic beyond all conceptions of their time,—the one penning the Gospel of the suffering Messiah, the other vindicating the truth that the Gospel is God's message to the *world*. The text reminds us—

I. Of the Christian's offer of service. The offer of service which the prophet made was—1. *Free.* He spoke spontaneously, and not as the result of pressure from without (α). 2. *Truthful.* Unlike one of the sons in the parable (Matt. xxi. 30), he meant what he said. 3. *Bold.* It was made concerning an unknown mission. The justification of the boldness of his offer is, that it was made to God, who always qualifies His servants for the tasks to which He calls them. 4. *Personal.* The prophet placed at God's disposal, not some of his property merely, but *himself.* 5. *It involved the most complete self-surrender.* All thought of self control the prophet resigned. He placed himself as an instrument in God's hands. He was ready to go where, when, and on what errand God might determine (β). Such are the offers of service in which God delights.

II. Of the steps that lead up to this offer. The offer may take men by surprise, but there has always been preparation for it, as there has been long preparation for the lightning that

leaps suddenly from the sky. Such offers as the prophet made are preceded—1. by *a vision of God*, of the thrice Holy One, filling the soul with awe, and causing it to tremble (vers. 1–4). 2. By *self-prostration of spirit*, a conviction of utter sinfulness (ver. 5). This is the invariable result of a true vision of God (Exod. iii. 2; Josh. v. 14; Judg. vi. 22, xiii. 22; Luke v. 8; Rev. 1. 17). This is also a prime condition of fitness for service. 3. By *the touch of a mediator* (vers. 6, 7). "They that be struck down by visions of God's glory shall soon be raised up again by visits of His grace." Blessed is the man who has *both* visions. A sense of pardon is essential to large usefulness. Imperfect realisation of forgiveness is one of the most frequent causes of weakness in Christian service. 4. By *a moral transformation*. The offerer has become a new man from the centre outwards. Now he can hear God's voice: "I heard," &c. It is a voice to which now he feels he *must* respond: "Here am I," &c. In some degree every Christian is thus prepared. These essentials of service are also essentials of Christian life. These experiences are at once your credentials and your powers.

III. That God always accepts offers of service for which there has been this preparation, and that bear these marks. He never rejects true volunteers. Offers hastily made and half-meant He passes by (Josh xxiv. 18, 19; John ii. 23–25); but genuine, whole-hearted offers of service, He invariably accepts.

In conclusion, let us lay up in our memories three facts in connection with service. 1. *True service is not incompatible with failure.* We are too apt to connect failure with incompetency in the servant. Many do fail through incompetency, but not all. The prophet divinely called and most royally endowed may fail, because of the moral obduracy and perverseness of those to whom he is sent (vers. 9, 10). 2. *True service is not incompatible with sorrow* (vers. 11, 12). That man is inhuman who without profound grief can behold the perversity of sinners, and the calamities with which in consequence they are visited. 3. *True service will never be left without reward.* Multitudes may reject the prophet's message, yet there will be "a tenth" who will accept it and be saved.—*J. R. Wood.*

(α) H. E. I., 3633—3639.

(β) H. E. I., 3618—3626.

Messengers Wanted.

vi. 8. *Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, &c.*

I. God wants messengers unto sinful men. Tidings concerning sin and salvation, mercy and deliverance, God's grace and man's misery, must be published. Might send seraphim and the angel host. God elects to send men to their fellow-men. "Whom shall I send?" is not the inquiry of a divine perplexity, but the stimulative question of one who calls for willing workers. II. God especially qualifies His messengers. How does He in an especial manner fit men for His highest service? 1. *By an awe-inspiring sight of Himself.* 2. *By distressing convictions of personal sin.* 3. *By sanctifying all the faculties to His use.* III. God's call should meet with a ready response. He desires volunteers, "Who will go for us?" The constraint of love is the omnipotent motive force. 1. *The call is heard individually.* "*I* heard the voice of the Lord." 2. *The call provokes self-surrender.* "Here am I." 3. *The call demands entire self-abandonment.* "Send me"—anywhere, on any errands, at any time, in any capacity. IV. How may we ascertain that we are required to become messengers of the living God? 1. By the separating voice of God. 2. By the discipline of preparation. 3. By the openings of beckoning opportunities. The "joy of the Lord" will be our strength when most we feel the pressure of "the burden of the Lord."—*Matthew Braithwaite.*

A Strange and Sad Errand.

vi. 9, 10. *And He said, Go, and tell this people, &c.*

A sad and mysterious errand, the statement of which might well have quenched the enthusiasm inspired by his vision of the Divine glory. When he exclaimed, "Here am I, send me!" how little did he anticipate for what purpose he would be sent! It must have astounded and saddened him, and it is full of astonishment and mystery for us. How could God have sent His servant on an errand such as this?

Much of the mystery will be relieved, though not altogether removed, if we recognise—what I believe to be the fact—that here we have a statement, not of the messages Isaiah was to deliver (for they were many, and were revealed to him at various times), but of what would be the result of them all. Those to whom he was sent, and whom he desired to bless, would not be made better, but worse, by his ministry.

This is in accordance with a well-known and terrible fact, viz., that the proclamation of truth often leads men to cleave more desperately to error (α). Why, then, does God send His servants to proclaim it?

Not because He desires the depravity and destruction of men. Such a desire would be utterly inconsistent with His *character* and with His express *declarations* (Ezek. xviii. 23, 32, &c.). We need not imagine, then, that we have here a confirmation of those schemes of arbitrary election and reprobation which some theologians have attributed to Him.

But 1. *Because it is necessary for the preservation of His character as a God of righteousness and mercy that He should do what* OUGHT *to result in the salvation of men.* Had He not sent His prophets forth on their sad mission, we should have been confronted by a greater difficulty: God permitting His chosen people to go on to ruin without one word of warning spoken, without one effort put forth to arrest them. But one of the supreme moral necessities of the universe is this, that His character as a God desiring the redemption of sinners should be maintained unimpaired; and therefore He sends forth His messengers to proclaim the truth, although He foresees that to many they will be the "savour of death unto death,"—as the frosty air of winter which cuts off the aged and feeble,—and not "the savour of life unto life,"—not as that same frosty air which "braces" and invigorates those who are already vigorous. As this quotation reminds you, this is the effect of the Gospel itself. Ought God, therefore, never to have sent its preachers forth? 2. *That stubborn sinners may be left without excuse in the day of their doom.* God will not merely take vengeance on the violators of His laws of righteousness; He will make it manifest that while in Him there is an awful severity, there is no vindictiveness; and He will so act that, even when that severity is most manifested, not only the onlookers, but even those who experience it shall be constrained to confess, "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints!" He will not leave it possible for them to say, "Hadst Thou warned us, we should not have sinned." They shall be speechless (Matt. xxii. 12; Jer. xliv. 2–5). 3. *That the righteous may be saved.* Did He not send His prophets forth to instruct and warn, even the men in whose hearts are the germs of righteousness and holiness of life would follow the multitude to do evil: *they* hear, and turn, and live: and this is ample justification of the prophet's mission. Those who perish would have perished without it; but without it those who are saved would have perished also. And in this respect Isaiah's ministry was not in vain: while to the vast majority of the nation it was "the savour of death unto death," it was to a few—"the holy

seed" of whom also this chapter speaks to us—"the savour of life unto life." They learned to trust, not in Assyria nor in Egypt, but in the Holy One of Israel, and therefore were "kept in perfect peace" amid all the convulsions and catastrophes of their time.

This passage seemed at the outset full of mystery; our tendency was to shun it as one that would not bear investigation, as one about which the least that could be said the better, as one which we could have wished had never been written. What do we see now? That here we have an illustration of the Psalmist's saying, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him"—so to our purblind vision it seems, the brightness being *so* bright that it dazzles and blinds us; "but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." What should we learn from this? 1. *Never to fear to investigate anything in God's Word.* There is nothing here which its friends need wish to hide out of sight; it is all worthy of Him from whom it came (Ps. xix. 9). 2. *Never to distrust God because of anything in either His Word or His Providence.* Things that might cause distrust we shall meet with; some of them we shall never explain here, where we can know only "in part;" yet let us keep fast hold of the glorious and gladdening truth, that "in Him is no darkness at all." God is light; God is love.

(a) To a man living in the belief of what is erroneous or the practice of what is wrong you proclaim the truth, and what happens? (1) Either he amends his creed or his conduct; or (2) he *disregards* what you say, and goes on as before; or (3) he *rejects* what you say, and cleaves to his error more passionately than he would have done otherwise. The latter is a very frequent result. For example, slavery once prevailed throughout our colonies and the United States of America. Holy men held slaves; they had no suspicion of the wrongfulness of slavery. When its wrongfulness was proclaimed, many abandoned it; but others held to it,—some not caring whether it was wrong or right, looking only to the fact that it was profitable; but others reasoned themselves into a persuasion that it is right, that it is Scriptural, and maintained the system with a tenacity and passion they never felt before its wickedness was declared. In thousands of cases that was the result of the anti-slavery movement. God foresaw it, yet He raised up faithful men to proclaim the doctrines of human brotherhood and freedom, and sent them forth on their perilous errand, saying to them in effect, "*Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*" He sent them forth, notwithstanding that He foresaw that one inevitable effect of their mission would be the confirmation of thousands in error, the hardening of thousands in iniquity. In like manner He raised up Isaiah and other prophets to denounce the sensuality of the Jews, to pronounce their political schemes—their alliances now with Egypt and now with Assyria—to be huge mistakes, and to exhort them to a life of holiness and of simple trust in God; He foresaw that the result of their efforts would *not* be the reformation of the nation, and yet He sent them forth!

The Rejection of Divine Truth.

vi. 9, 10. *And He said, Go, and tell this people, &c.*

The divine message—a message of melting pathos and of startling warning, of beseeching entreaty and of terrible threatening—must be delivered to men. "Go, and tell this people" is a command that shatters excuses and imposes an imperative obligation. God's speakers have no option—speak they must (Jonah iii. 2). The effects of God's communications correspond to the willingness or the wilfulness of men.

I. Divine truth elicits human disposition. In the spring season, the sun sits in judgment upon the trees of gardens and forests. Then the trees that have life have it more abundantly. Their latent powers and possibilities are developed and exhibited. The same sun-force smites the decaying trees and shrivels those having only goodliness without life. Is not the Sun of Righteousness "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"? When on earth, He who is "the Truth" evoked the hidden feelings, purposes, and quali-

ties of men; and His manifold message repeats the process to the end of time (John ix. 39). The ministry of Isaiah was a revealing ministry: the character of men and the character of the nation by it were made manifest. II. Divine truth repelled because of dislike. "Lest they see, hear, understand, be converted and healed." A diseased eye winces under the scorching sunlight, as a disordered soul will flinch under the fierce light that streams upon it from above. The disquieted conscience repels the entrance of the truth, because of the revolutions in thought, disposition, purpose, character, and activity which its admission would necessitate. None are so blind, deaf, insensible as those who do not want to see, hear, or feel (John iii. 19, 20). Men dislike the purpose of God's good but severe discipline: they want not to "be converted and healed," and they recoil from the painful process (α). III. Divine truth cannot be rejected without injury. Divine truth and grace will not be void of result, though the result may be most injurious (Rom. ii. 4, 5). Consequences of lasting duration are involved in our action of opening or shutting the doors of the soul (β). Not to receive the "grace upon grace" of God is to put the spirit into an attitude of opposition: this attitude can easily become a confirmed habit; and the habit, in righteous retribution, may be ratified (Rev. xxii. 11). Antagonism to God's revelation injures the soul's highest life; its power of vision is dimmed or veiled; the understanding loses its alertness and fails to comprehend; the affections become gross and carnal. Inexorable is the spiritual law and appalling the spiritual doom (Eph. iv. 18). Isaiah unfolded God's design of salvation; but the design was intercepted and frustrated by human perversity. Men "rejected the counsel of God against themselves," and persistent resistance rendered them "past feeling." "Take heed how ye hear." "Hear, and your soul shall live" (γ).—*Matthew Braithwaite.*

(α) "There is light enough for those whose sincere desire is to see; and darkness enough for those of a contrary disposition. There is brightness enough to illuminate the elect; and enough of obscurity to humble them. There is obscurity enough to blind the reprobate; and brightness enough to condemn them and to leave them without excuse."—*Blaise Pascal.*

(β) "The smallest particle of light falling on the sensitive plate produces a chemical change that can never be undone again; and the light of Christ's love, once brought to the knowledge and presented for the acceptance of a soul, stamps on it an ineffaceable sign of its having been there. Once heard, it is henceforward a perpetual element in the whole condition, character, and destiny of the hearer. Every man that ever rejects Christ, does these things thereby—wounds his own conscience, hardens his own heart, and makes himself a worse man, just because he has had a glimpse of holiness, and has willingly, and almost consciously, "loved darkness rather than light." Unbelief is its own judgment, its own condemnation: unbelief, as sin, is punished like other sins, by the perpetuation of deeper and darker forms of itself. Every time that you stifle a conviction, fight down a conviction, or din away a conviction, you have harmed your soul, made yourself a worse man, lowered the tone of your conscience, enfeebled your will, made your heart harder against love; you have drawn another horny scale over the eye that will prevent you seeing the light that is yonder. You have, as much as in you is, approximated to the other pole of the universe (if I may say that), to the dark and deadly antagonist of mercy, and goodness, and truth, and grace."—*Alexander Maclaren.*

(γ) "The great iniquity is, or then is the Gospel hid in a sinful sense, when men have it among them, or may have it, and will not hear it; or do hear it, and never understand it,—that is, never apply or set themselves to understand it; or receive no conviction from it; or receive no suitable impression on their hearts from it. Thus, all the while, is the Gospel hid to them by their own iniquity, that they do voluntarily make resisting efforts against it, as everything of sin must have somewhat of *voluntarium* in it. It supposeth that otherwise a brute agent might be as capable of sin as a rational one, and that cannot be. But here lies the iniquity, that men might understand and they will not; and there is a natural faculty that should turn them, even in their very hearts; but there is a sinful disinclination, and they will not turn. For it is the will that is not turned: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." And so, when the Gospel is hid, it is hid, not because men cannot see, but because they will not. They do (as it were) pretend the veil; stretch forth the veil before their eyes or bind it close over their own eyes, hoodwink themselves that they will not see. Being thus en-

fully hidden, it comes also to be penally hidden by a *nemesis*, hidden by a just *vindicta*. Ye will not understand, then ye shall not understand; ye will harden your hearts against light, against grace, against the design of the Gospel, and they shall be hardened. Since ye will have it so, so let it be."—*John Hosa.*

D.P.Q., 2938, 3391.

The Duration of the Prophet's Mission.

vi. 11–13. *Then said I, Lord, how long? &c.*

For an exposition of this passage see note (α).

Let us look steadily at the *facts* before us, and then, perchance, we may discern the *lessons* associated with them. Isaiah desires to know how long his strange and sad mission is to continue; and the answer is, until its utter failure to save his fellow-countrymen from their sins and their impending doom has been demonstrated, until nothing but the mere life-germ of the nation is left. Here really are three facts, full of instruction for us to-day. I. *Isaiah's mission and the calamities he desired to avert by it were to work together.* There was thus a twofold appeal to the men of that generation; and at its close God might have repeated the challenge, "What could I have done more?" (chap. v. 4). Both by offers of mercy and manifestations of righteous anger He sought to deliver them from the doom towards which they madly hastened. Thus God deals with the world to-day: His preachers of righteousness and His judgments because of unrighteousness work side by side; this fact is a conclusive proof that God is not willing that the sinner should die. This is true of nations, and it is true of individuals. II. *Isaiah was to prosecute his mission to the end, notwithstanding the proofs that his efforts to deliver his fellow-countrymen were vain.* This is always the duty of God's messengers: they are to deliver their message, and reiterate it, whether men accept or reject it. Whether it is popular or unpopular is a thing of which they are not even to think! the one thing they have to consider and remember is, that it is true. III. *In the midst of all the calamities of his time, Isaiah was sustained by the assurance that the nation he loved should not utterly perish.* Nothing could hurt "the holy seed" that constituted its true life. The Church of to-day is full of imperfections; the forces of unbelief are marshalling themselves against her; it may be that she will again be tried by fierce persecutions: but the Lord's true prophet can survey all these possible calamities with calmness; he knows that "the holy seed" which constitutes her true life cannot be injured by them.

Here, then, is instruction and encouragement for the Lord's prophet to-day. He is to preach the preaching which God has bidden him, regardless of everything but the fact that God had sent it forth. He is not to modify his message, to make it more palatable to his hearers. He must not cease to deliver it, although he sees that his hearers are hardening themselves against it, and so are bringing upon themselves a heavier doom. Comfort he will need, but he must find it in the fact that there is a "holy seed" to whom his ministry will be a blessing, and in whose salvation, if he be faithful to the end, he shall share.

In this passage there are also some supplementary lessons of general interest. 1. We have here an illustration of *the persistence and success of the divine purposes.* God selected the descendants of Abraham as the instruments through whom He would bless the world (Exod. xix. 5, 6). Their history has been one long struggle against this purpose; but it has not been a frustration of it: their very waywardness and wickedness have afforded occasions for the manifestation of His character, and the consequent revelations both of His goodness and of His severity have been

blessings to the world. In spite even of their rejection of His Son they are still His people, and He will at length make them a holy people (Rom. xi. 25–29). 2. *God does not hesitate to use any means that will help to conform His chosen ones to His own ideal.* It is a solemn thing to be chosen of God: that choice may involve possibilities from which flesh and blood shrinks (β). The way to avoid those possibilities is to find out what God's purpose concerning us is, and endeavour to conform ourselves thereto: then we shall find His choice of us a well-spring of constant blessing. 3. *God does not despise the merest germs of goodness.* Insignificant, comparatively, as was "the holy seed" in Israel, He watched over it with ceaseless care. Comfort there is here for those who lament that there is in them so little of which God can approve. That little He will not despise (1 Kings xiv. 13; Isa. xlii. 3); He sees what possibilities of excellence there are in His chosen ones (γ); and those little germs of excellence He will nourish until they have developed into that which will satisfy even Himself.

(α) He inquired how long this service of hardening and this state of hardness were to continue,—a question forced from him by his sympathy with the nation to which he himself belonged (cf. Exod. xxxii. 9–14), and one which was warranted by the certainty that God, who is ever true to His promises, could not cast off Israel as a people for ever. The answer follows in ver. 11 *b*—13: "*Until towns are wasted without inhabitant, and houses are without man, and the ground shall be laid waste, a wilderness, and Jehovah shall put men far away, and there shall be many forsaken places within the land. And is there still a tenth therein, this also again is given up to destruction, like the terebinth and the oak, of which, when they are felled, only a root-stump remains: such a root-stump is the holy seed.*" The hardening judgment would come to an end only when the land of Israel had been made utterly desolate. Up to the words "given up to destruction," the announcement is a threatening one; but from this point to "remains" a consolatory prospect begins to dawn; and in the last three words this brighter prospect, like a distant streak of light, bounds the horizon of the gloomy prophecy. It shall happen as with the terebinth and the oak. These trees were selected as illustrations, not only because they were so near akin to evergreens, and produced a similar impression, or because there were so many associations connected with them in the olden times of Israel's history; but also because they formed such fitting symbols of Israel, on account of their peculiar facility for springing up again from the root (like the beech and nut, for example), even when they had been completely felled. . . . The root-stump was the remnant that had survived the judgment, and this remnant would become a seed, out of which a new Israel would spring up after the old had been destroyed. Thus in a few words is the way sketched out which God would henceforth take with His people. The passage contains an outline of the history of Israel to the end of time. Israel as a nation was indestructible, by virtue of the promise of God; but the mass of the people were doomed to destruction through the judicial sentence of God, and only a remnant, which would be converted, would perpetuate the nationality of Israel, and inherit the glorious future. This law of a blessing sunk in the depths of the curse actually inflicted still prevails in the history of the Jews. The way of salvation is open to all. Individuals find it, and give us a presentiment of what might be and is to be; but the great mass are hopelessly lost, and only when they have been swept away will a holy seed, saved by the covenant-keeping God, grow up into a new and holy Israel, which, according to chap. xxvii. 6, will fill the earth with its fruits, or, as the Apostle expresses it in Romans xi. 12, become "the riches of the Gentiles."—*Delitzsch.*

(β) *Homiletic Encyclopædia of Illustrations*, 86–90, 99–115.

(γ) As the eye of the cunning lapidary detects in the rugged pebble, just digged from the mine, the polished diadem that shall sparkle in the diadem of a king; or as the sculptor in the rough block of marble, newly hewn from the quarry, beholds the statue of perfect grace and beauty which is latent there, and waiting but the touch of his hand,—so He who sees all, and the end from the beginning, sees oftentimes greater wonders than these. He sees the saint in the sinner, the saint that shall be in the sinner that is; the wheat in the tare; the shepherd feeding the sheep in the wolf tearing the sheep; Paul in the preacher of the faith in Saul the persecutor of the faith; Israel a prince with God in Jacob the trickster and the supplanter; Matthew the Apostle in Levi the publican; a woman that should love much in a woman sinning much; and in some vine of the earth bringing forth wild grapes and grapes of gall a tree which shall yet bring forth good fruit, and wine to make glad the heart; so that when some, like those over-zealous servants in the parable, would have Him pluck it up, and to cast it without more ado into the wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God, He exclaims rather, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it," and is well content to await the end.—*Trench.*

See also *Homiletic Encyclopædia*, &c., 2454 and 3056.

Fears and Comforts.

vii. 1–9. *And it came to pass, in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, &c.*

The historical statements (α) in these verses afford illustrations of spiritual truths. **I. The powers of evil are confederate against the Lord's people** (vers. 1, 2, 6). By the combined forces of evil, God's chosen ones have always been assailed. The conflict began in Eden, and has continued ever since. These combined forces attacked our Lord, and appeared for a time, outwardly at least, to conquer. We must expect similar assaults (John xvi. 33). The ultimate object of these foes is to destroy our spiritual life. **II. The Lord's people are often terrified by the action of their foes.** Two things may contribute to this. 1. *A sense of personal guilt.* Conscience often slumbers in prosperity, but awakens and alarms us when danger threatens. No doubt Ahaz remembered his sin, when he saw his foes were coming. 2. *Distrust of the Lord.* It does not appear that Ahaz told the Lord about his trouble, or sought His help. His idolatry had led him into unbelief—a frequent cause of the Christian's terrors. He looks at his troubles, and sinks, because he does not lay hold on Christ (Matt. xiv. 30). **III. God seeks to allay the fears of His people in the hour of their trouble.** This is done in three ways. 1. *By exhorting them to keep their minds calm.* "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted." Picture Ahaz restless, excited, his breast fainting, hope and courage failing. How timely was the prophet's exhortation! how helpful it might have been to Ahaz! Who of us does not know the blessedness of such an appeal? We have been excited, trembling, fainting, because of temporal dangers or spiritual foes, and in our agitation have been likely to do something foolish. But a voice has said, "Fear not; be calm!" Who says, "Fear not"? The loving, omnipotent Saviour, who is able to deliver us. 2. *By showing His people the weakness of their foes.* They are only the "two tails of smoking firebrands." You think them powerful, but they are really weak (1 John iv. 4). 3. *By predicting the failure of the plans of their foes* (vers. 7–9)—a prediction which was fulfilled sixty-five years afterwards, when Esarhaddon desolated the country, and filled it with foreigners. So God shows to us the weakness of our foes, and predicts their failure. **IV. God shows His people that faith is necessary for the establishment of their peace** (ver. 9. See also 2 Chron. xx. 20; Isa. xxvi. 3).—*H. F. Walker.*

(α) For a statement of these circumstances see following paper: The Virgin's Son.

Faith's Impregnable Citadel.

vii. 1–9. *And it came to pass, in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, &c.*

I. There are many things calculated to fill us with fear—sufferings, losses, temptations, death, &c. Especially alarming are combinations of evil: when they threaten, we are apt to feel as did Ahaz and his people (ver. 2). Afflictions seldom come singly: sickness brings poverty in its train, &c.; and the heart is apt to fail before such accumulations of misfortune. **II. But God guarantees the safety of those who trust in Him.** 1. *He controls all events* (ver. 7). The Prince of Orange, when he took the field against France and the Emperor, said he had made an alliance with Heaven, and feared not for the result. Much more may the believer be confident in the warfare of life (H. E. I. 200–203, 2372, 2373, 4049, 4055–4058). 2. *It is only while we trust in Him that we are thus in alliance with Him.* Only by trusting in Him are we kept from trusting in that which cannot deliver us—ourselves or our fellow-men, to the exclusion of God and the rejection of His proffered help.

Only by trusting in Him are our hearts kept in peace (chap. xxvi. 3. H. E. I. 1893, 1894, 1911–1919, 1923–1926). Only by trusting in Him do we give Him the glory which is His due, and which He will not give to another (H. E. I. 4054). **III. The guarantee of safety which God offers to all who trust Him extends to the soul as well as the body.** Because of our sins, and the enemies they bring against us, we might well fear; but in the Gospel help is offered, or perfect safety is guaranteed to them that believe. **IV. The inevitable result of refusal to accept the help which God mercifully offers us is ruin.** Ahaz, refusing the sign offered him, and trusting in Assyria, was overthrown by his ally. There is deadly peril in any other alliance than that which God offers to form with us. Said our Lord to all who are tempted to apostacy, "Remember Lot's wife," and in like manner we may say to all who are tempted to disregard and reject God's offers of help, *Remember Ahaz!—John Johnston.*

Purposes and Panics.

vii. 1, 2. *And it came to pass, in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, &c.*

In this brief record of events (a) that occurred so long ago, we may find suggestions of truths which it will be well for us to lay to heart to-day. **I. Men often confidently form purposes which they find it impossible to fulfil** (ver. 1). Rezin and Pekah no doubt were sure their project would be successful; they left no means untried to make it a success; they had many things to encourage them (2 Chron. xxviii. 5–7); success seemed certain, yet they failed! In verse 6 we have another statement of their purpose, and in verse 7 we are told the real reason why it failed: God determined that it should not stand. This is an illustration of much that takes place in our own day, in our own life. Purposes daringly conceived, and wisely and energetically prosecuted, come to nothing; and in such cases God is often the real hindrance. He hinders, not because He has any capricious delight in frustrating our plans, but because in them we intend only our own self-aggrandisement. It is with our purposes as with our prayers (Jas. iv. 3). If He hinders, no alliance formed with men can profit us; even Rezin will help in vain. 1. In forming our plans, let us remember and acknowledge our dependence on the permission and help of God (Jas. iv. 13–15; Ps. cxxvii. 1). If plans should be formed for our hurt or overthrow, let us comfort ourselves by remembering that all men are under God's control. The confederacy may be very powerful: most elaborate preparations may be made for the accomplishment of its purpose; but there can be no success unless the Lord will (Dan. iii. 16–18). **II. Men often give way to unreasonable panics** (ver. 2). Panics are very common, very painful, very dangerous and hurtful. Their cause: lack of faith in God. Without faith in the controlling providence of God, men are naturally as liable to alarm as is a wealthy man who on a foggy night has to make his way through a dangerous quarter of a strange city; he knows not whether the footsteps he hears behind him are those of a policeman or of a garotter! Firmness is the reward of faith—of intelligent confidence exercised by righteous men in a righteous God (Ps. iii. 6; lvi. 11; xci. 5; cxii. 7, 8, &c.). Deliverance from fear is one of the respects in which "godliness has the promise of the life that now is." This blessing may be yours, if you will; yours in times of domestic, of commercial, of national alarm. You may be delivered, if you will, from the supreme fear—fear of death. Christ came into the world for the purpose of delivering you from it (Heb. ii. 14, 15). Yield yourself to be really His, and your end shall be peace (Ps. xxiii. 4; lxxiii. 26).

(a) For a statement of these events, see following paper: The Virgin's Son.

Isaiah's Interview with Ahaz.

vii. 3–25. *Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, &c.*

In this interview of Isaiah with Ahaz we have an instance—I. Of God's efforts to turn men from ruinous courses. God is the great Lawgiver, and the Judge before whose bar all impenitent transgressors of His law will have to stand. Absolute inflexibility is necessarily His characteristic in both these capacities. But these are not the only capacities He seeks to sustain to us. It is His ambition to be the Saviour of men from sin and ruin. Consequently, He does not merely lay down His law and stand coldly by, to see whether men will keep it or not. He plies them with inducements to keep it. When He sees them bent on transgression, He endeavours to arrest them in their foolish and fatal purpose. Short of that destruction of the freedom of their will, which would be the destruction also of their responsibility and of their possibilities of virtue, He leaves nothing undone to turn them from the broad road that leads to death (α). By adverse providences, by the strivings of His Holy Spirit, by awakening conscience to an active exercise of its functions, He works upon and in them to will and to do His good pleasure. No sinner has ever gone down to perdition unheeded, unpitied, without attempts to rescue him. Your own experience attests the truth of these statements: you know you had to fight your way through to those transgressions of which you are now ashamed. God's "preventing grace" is a great fact of which we should take reverent heed, and for which we should give fervent thanks (β). II. Of the manner in which sinners, by insincere pretences, resist God's saving purposes. The stubbornness and insincerity of Ahaz are obvious (γ). But in neither of these is he singular. Sinners who are bent on their sins not seldom go on to them under pretexts of righteousness, with which they endeavour to deceive themselves and others. The greatest crime ever committed was done under a pretext of righteousness (Matt. xxvi. 65). So has it been with countless crimes since. Let us be on our guard against our own hearts (Jer. xvii. 9; Prov. xiv. 12). Let us not act upon any reason which we do not really believe will bear the scrutiny of God. III. Of the twofold result which always follows such resistance to the divine purposes. 1. *The sinner is, ere long, compelled to confess that the counsels he set aside were counsels of truth and wisdom.* In less than three years, Ahaz had cause to acknowledge the soundness of the advice to which on this memorable day he refused to listen (δ). A typical case. 2. *The obstinate sinner is left to the ruin from which he would not permit God to deliver him.* There is no salvation by force. God acts upon our will, but He will not save us against our will. Neither shall those who refused to be saved from sin be saved from its consequences. If we choose evil, no act of omnipotence will render the choice harmless (chap. iii. 11). Ahaz chose the help of Assyria rather than the help of Jehovah, and with the help of that great and unscrupulous power he had to take its domination and destructiveness (2 Chron. xxviii. 16, 20). Again a typical case. The retributive justice of God is a fact of which it behoves us to be heedful.

(α) Augustine, in his *Confessions*, makes thankful note of the manner in which, in the years of his ungodliness, God had raised up obstacles in his path of sin. When sinful desires raged within him, he says, the means for gratifying them were absent; or when the desires and the means of gratifying them came together, some witness was present to deter him; and when the means were present, and no witnesses stood by to hinder him, the desire to transgress was wanting. He rightly judged that these were no mere accidents or coincidences.

(β) The preventing methods of grace may deservedly pass for some of the prime instances of the divine mercy to men in this world. For though it ought to be owned for an eminent act of grace to restore one actually fallen,

yet there are not wanting arguments to persuade, that it is a greater to keep one from falling. Not to break a limb is more desirable than to have it set and healed, though never so skilfully and well. Preservation in this, as in many other cases, being better a great deal than restoration; since after all is done, it is odds but the scar will remain when the wound is cured and the danger over.—*South.*

(γ) Ahaz listened in sullen and incredulous silence; and the prophet resumes—"Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above." But Ahaz, who looked on Jehovah not as his God, but only (like any of his heathen neighbours) as the god of Judæa, and as such inferior to the god of Assyria; and who had determined to apply to the king of Assyria, or perhaps had already applied to him, as a more trustworthy helper than Jehovah, in the present strait; declines to ask a sign, excusing himself by a contrary use of the words of Moses, "Thou shalt not tempt Jehovah." He refused the sign, because he knew it would confirm the still struggling voice of his conscience; and that voice he had resolved not to obey, since it bid him give up the Assyrian, and trust in Jehovah henceforth.—*Strachey.*

(δ) Within the space of time figuratively indicated by the time necessary for the child of the prophet to become capable of discerning between good and evil,—*i.e.*, in about three years,—Rezin and Pekah were slain, and the fact that they were but "two tails of smoking firebrands" demonstrated. (See 2 Kings xv. 27–30; xvi. 1–9.)

A Threefold Counsel.

vii. 4. *Take heed, and be quiet; fear not.*

I. "Take heed." This is just what Ahaz fancied he was doing. He was taking heed to the alliance which had been formed for his overthrow, and he was at that very moment doing his best to frustrate it—by strengthening the fortifications of Jerusalem, and by summoning the king of Assyria to his help. This seemed to him and his court supremely wise: it was eminently foolish. He was taking heed exclusively to the danger, and had no attention left for the divinely-provided defence against it. That defence lay in God's promise made to David (2 Sam. vii. 12–16). From one point of view, it may be said that in allying themselves for the destruction of the royal house of David, Rezin, Pekah, and the son of Tabeal embarked on an enterprise foredoomed to failure; they might as well have conspired to prevent the sun from rising any more in the east. That the descendants of David should reign in Jerusalem and that the sun should rise in the east, were both guaranteed by the same thing—the will and appointment of God. Resistance was as vain in the one case as in the other—that is, while the conditions attached to the promise made to David were observed. For there were conditions attached to it (1 Chron. xxviii. 9; 2 Chron. xv. 2). It was to this great promise and to its essential conditions that God would have Ahaz "take heed."

"*Take heed*" is good counsel to give to every man standing in covenant relations with God. Many of us stand in such relations to Him, both as the result of the relations in which our parents stood to Him (Ex. xx. 6; Deut. vii. 9, &c.), and as the result of our personal acts; "the seed of the righteous," we have ourselves voluntarily taken the Lord to be our God, and have solemnly sworn to walk before Him in righteousness all the days of our life. Let us then evermore "take heed" to this covenant which God has condescended to make with us. It lays upon us great responsibilities, but it secures to us glorious privileges. Conspicuous among them is this, that we need not fear the might of any of our adversaries, whether they be those of the body or of the soul (ch. liv. 17).

II. "Be quiet." Or better, "*And* be quiet." Quietness would follow naturally from right heed-taking. What was Ahaz doing? He was straining every nerve to do for himself what God had promised to do for him. God had promised to defend Zion and her king, and if Ahaz had had faith in God's promise, the appeal to Assyria for succour would never have been made. Alas! how often have better

men than Ahaz failed in this very respect. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the founders of the Hebrew nation, all fell into grievous sin through that want of faith in God's promises which led them to try to do for themselves what God had promised to do for them (cf. Gen. xv. 1, and xx. 11–13; xxvi. 3 and 7; xxv. 23, and xxvii. 24). To what a shameful state of degradation was David brought by the same cause (cf. 1 Sam. xvi. 13 and xxi. 12, 13). How many imitators they have had! God has promised that His people shall be safe and prosperous; but not taking heed to His promises, to how many tricks and devices have they had recourse to secure for themselves the blessing God would surely have sent to them if they had been obedient and believing, and into what shame, misery, and ruin have they plunged themselves (α). Let their sins be to us as beacons; let us "take heed" to God's covenant on both its sides, and be quiet (Ps. xxxvii. 3–9).

III. "Fear not." Yet there seemed good reason for fear. It was really a powerful confederacy that threatened Ahaz with destruction. Looked at on its human side, it was no groundless panic that had smitten him and his people. Yet the pain of mind and heart which they endured (ver. 2), they endured needlessly. They were really in no danger from their enemies. Their danger lay only in the unbelief and stubbornness of their own hearts. They had but to return to the Lord and they would find Him a refuge and strong tower, as their fathers had done aforetime. "*Fear not*" is the counsel which I give to God's people to-day. Some of you are fearing greatly; some concerning temporal things, some lest the spiritual conflict you are waging should issue in defeat and eternal ruin. "Take heed" to the promises God has made to you in both these respects; "be quiet," and fret not yourselves in any wise to do evil; with calm and courageous hope wait for the fulfilment of those promises; instead of yielding to distressing, utterly unnecessary, and God-dishonouring fears, say with David (Ps. xxvii. 1, xxxiv. 22).

(α) See *Homiletic Encyclopædia of Illustrations*, Nos. 173–175, 2017.

HEEDFULNESS.

vii. 4. *Take heed.*

The Hebrew word signifies, to prevent or keep off any evil with which we are threatened. The direction ought to extend to all that we do; for not one duty can be rightly performed without diligent attention, and it is no less incumbent upon us than upon the king and people of Judah (H. E. I. 4880–4890). It is a necessary and useful caution, which ought to be reduced to practice at all times, especially in seasons of perplexity and distress, such as that wherein Ahaz and his subjects received this admonition. 1. Take heed to your *senses*, particularly what you see and hear; for these are the avenues by which sin and vanity, or wisdom and instruction, enter into the heart (H. E. I. 4895). 2. Take heed to your *actions*, what you do, and how you act, and for what purpose you are employed, that you may happily avoid the many sins and dangers to which you are exposed, and attain the great ends which you ought uniformly to pursue. 3. Take heed to your *tongue*, that you sin not with your mouth; consider wisely what you say, to whom you speak, and to what purpose, especially when your minds are fretted, and when you feel yourselves under the influence of timidity and disappointment (P. D. 3558, 3559). 4. Take heed to your *hearts*, and keep them with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life; attend to the secret operations of your minds, and the objects on which your affections terminate, that you may perceive whether they are properly moderated and directed (H. E. I. 2695–2705, 4887; P. D. 1735). —*Robert Macculloch: Lectures on Isaiah* vol. i. p. 395.

Faith, the Condition of Firmness.

vii. 9. *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.*

"Established" is what every man wishes to be — fixed in fact and in feeling; established like a great oak which, because its roots take fast hold of the soil, is able to grow broader and higher and more luxuriant year by year. Such growth is impossible to a tree that is frequently transplanted. Notwithstanding—nay, in perfect harmony with the desire for progress that is in us all, we all desire to be "established."

But no man can be "established" unless he believes. It is a universal law: No faith, no firmness. There are two things essential to "establishment," to blessedness and peace in life: First, that we should find a good foundation, and then that we should rest upon it calmly and immovably. These are the conditions of social, commercial, political, and scientific blessedness and prosperity. In every realm of human activity, if we would be strong in fact and in feeling, it is essential that we should find something trustworthy, and then that we should trust (H. E. I. 1882–1888).

We are only stating this general truth in its highest form, when we say that if men do not believe in God as He has revealed Himself in His Word, they cannot be "established." 1. God has revealed Himself in His Word *as the righteous Ruler of nations*, who will exalt the nations that seek after righteousness, and bring swift vengeance upon those who follow courses of evil. What will happen if a statesman, like Ahaz, does not really believe this? He will become a mere politician; he will do what seems to him "expedient." This will often be iniquitous, and this at no distant period will inevitably lead to disaster and ruin (P. D. 2544). 2. God has revealed Himself *as the supporter and rewarder of individual men who are resolved always and simply to do what is right.* Confidence in God as thus revealed to them was the secret of the courage and endurance of the martyrs (Dan. iii. 16–18), and of countless sacrifices for truth and righteousness known only to God, but which He will never forget. But if a man does not really believe this truth, how easily is he swept away by temptation, whether it presents itself threateningly or seductively! 3. God has revealed Himself *as, for Christ's sake, pardoning absolutely all who repent and believe.* Into the hearts of those who accept this revelation there come peace and joy, but into their hearts only. Want of faith in this revelation is the secret of all painful efforts to merit the Divine mercy. 4. God reveals Himself *as the Saviour of His people from sin*, as their Sanctifier from all the stains of iniquity. Want of faith in this revelation is the secret of the trouble that fills and oppresses many devout souls. They will never travel towards Zion with steadfast feet and rejoicing hearts until they do indeed believe it (Jude 24, 25). 5. God reveals Himself in Christ *as the Good Shepherd who is with His people always.* How troubled, because of the possibilities of life and the mystery of death, are those who do not with any vital faith accept this revelation which He has been pleased to give us! But the twenty-third Psalm is the song of those who do believe it (P. D. 1156–1160).

The practical application of all this is very simple, but supremely important. First, let us inquire whether God is worthy of our trust; and then, if the inquiry should lead us to an affirmative conclusion, let us trust Him. This trust will transform our whole life. No terrors shall have power to dismay us. The misery of Ahaz and his people (ver. 2) we shall never know (H. E. I. 1911–1919); but ours shall be the rejoicing confidence of the spiritual hero of whom Ahaz was such an unworthy descendant (Ps. xxvii. 1–6; P. D. 1177).

Stability through Faith.

vii. 9. *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.*

Thus closes the address of Isaiah to Ahaz and his people on a very memorable and trying occasion. . . . Its meaning is, Take God at His word; place entire reliance upon Him, and not upon an arm of flesh. If ye will not do this as a country, the state cannot be safe; and if you will not do this as individuals, your minds cannot be composed and established. Now, let us pass from the house of David naturally to the house of David spiritually, and pursue the train of thought set in motion. Let us consider the stability of faith, and the peace it induces. In the Christian's life there are three kinds of stability. **I. There is a stability of judgment.** This regards the *truths* of religion. It is of great importance to have a judgment clear and fixed, as it respects the great concerns of the soul and eternity, and the great doctrines of the Gospel of Christ; for as we think we feel, as we feel we desire, as we desire we act, and as we act our characters are formed and our conditions determined. Instability concerning these great truths is both perilous and painful; but whence is stability to come? Not through human authority; for what one patronises, another denies. Not through human reason (H. E. I. 537, 1087, 2022–2024; P. D. 2926, 2929, 2931, 2934). There must be a revelation received by faith; divine declarations, believed because God has made them. This leads to an experience which tends still further to establish the Christian in the faith (H. E. I. 1087, 1142–1148). **II. There is a stability of practice.** This regards the *duties* of religion (1 Pet. i. 5). In order to see the strength and beauty of the sentiment contained in the text, let us place the believer in three positions. 1. In a place of *secrecy.* To many this is a place of temptation. Not so to the believer. Faith brings God and places him before us (Gen. xvi. 13; xxxix. 9). 2. In *prosperity and indulgence* (Prov. i. 32). But faith brings to the Christian the earnests of a better country, the firstfruits and foretastes of it, and thus gives him a victory which others can never achieve (1 John v. 4). 3. In a condition of *suffering and danger* (Heb. xi. 24–27; Dan. vi. 10; H. E. I. 1911–1919). **III. There is a stability of hope.** This regards the *comforts* of religion (Rom. xv. 13; 1 Pet. i. 8; Ps. xxiii. 1, 4, 6).

1. *Beware of unbelief.* It is a grievous offence against God; it is hurtful and perilous to man. Every sin renders our salvation impossible by the law, but only one sin renders it impossible by the Gospel, and that is unbelief; not by any decree or threatening of God, but by its natural tendency and result. For there is only one remedy that can restore a perishing sinner, and if this be rejected, destruction is inevitable (H. E. I. 443). 2. *Labour and pray for an increase of faith* (Mark ix. 23: 2 Chron. xx. 20).—*William Jay: Sunday Morning Sermons,* pp. 101–109).

Man's Imagined Independence of God.

vii. 12. *But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.*

We are commanded to ask for all we need and desire (Matt. vii. 7; Phil. iv. 6). But many say, "I will not ask." **I. Men are apt to act thus when possessed of earthly resources.** How hard is it for a man of wealth to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread!" He has much goods laid up for many years. How natural for a man in health and prosperity thus to forget his dependence on God (H. E. I. 4000, 4001). Even in trouble a man is apt to look elsewhere for aid: *e.g.*, in sickness to the physician; even when convinced of sin, to his own efforts, or to a human priest. **II. Men**

often act thus on the pretence of not tempting God. On the ground that their affairs are beneath His notice (H. E. I. 4015–4025, 2245–2248, 2325, 3226, 3403). On the ground that God has already established the laws by which all things are regulated (H. E. I. 3179–3182, 3751, 3752, 3757). III. But the real reasons why men act thus are because they trust in themselves, and have no real faith in God. The real reason why Ahaz did not ask was because he was bent on forming an alliance with Assyria. Let it be ours gratefully to accept the privilege so graciously offered, seeing that God has given us far more than was given to Ahaz: we have all the great and precious promises contained in the Scriptures, the knowledge of the unspeakable gift of God's dear Son, the accumulated experience of all generations of His faithfulness as the hearer of prayer. We may have our own experience of it; if we will but ask, we shall receive. How much greater our sin than that of Ahaz, if in these circumstances we say, "I will not ask!"—*John Johnston.*

Momentous Decisions.

vii. 12. *But Ahaz said, I will not ask, &c.*

In studying what the commentators have to say about this chapter, I met with a sentence that set me thinking. It was this: "In that very hour, in which Isaiah was standing before Ahaz, the fate of Jerusalem was decided for more than two thousand years" (*Delitzsch*). I. How true is this declaration! Ahaz was called upon to choose between the alliance with Assyria and alliance with God. His choice was announced in these four words, "I will not ask;" then he decided against God, and all the disasters which have come upon Jerusalem since that day have been in a very real sense the result of that fatal decision. II. How typical is this incident! How often men, like Ahaz, arrive at decisions which are irrevocable and unspeakably momentous! 1. To have to make decisions that may be solemn in both these senses is one of the things that make the position of a ruler or statesman so serious. Not to be coveted are the positions in which a man's resolves and utterances become fateful for whole peoples. But Pharaoh was in such a position, and like Ahaz he made a fatal mistake (Exod. x. 28). 2. Few are called to fill positions of such responsibility, but every man is at some juncture called to make a decision the results of which to him individually will be of unspeakable importance. The Young Ruler arrived at such a juncture, and made such a decision. Every one of you will at some moment be called upon to decide for or against Christ, and the decision will be final and irreversible. The fact that it is so will probably not be suspected by you; you will decide against Christ, in the expectation of reversing the decision on some other occasion, *which will never come to you.* This decision you *may* make now; it is the undeniable possibility which makes the preaching and hearing of the Gospel so solemn a thing. This supreme decision may be made by you in another manner. The test may come to you in another form—in the shape of a temptation appealing to some passion of the mind or lust of the flesh, and your eternal destiny may be determined by the manner in which you deal with that *one* temptation (H. E. I. 4737, 4738, 4636). 3. Like a railway train, we are continually arriving at "points," and the manner in which we "take" them affects our whole after career. This is true in regard to many things, unspeakably inferior in importance to the questions of surrender or non-surrender to Christ, or of loyalty or disloyalty to Him, but yet of marvellous influence in deter-

mining whether our after life is to be happy or miserable: business, social and domestic relations.

In view of these facts—that so much may depend upon any decision we make, and that it is absolutely concealed from us *which* decisions are final and irrevocable—what is it that, as wise men, it becomes us to do? 1. Let us settle each question that is put before us in the spirit of righteousness. Always let us ask only, What is *right?* (1.) This is the only path of *safety.* (2.) By this path *heroism* is reached, and *world-wide influence* may be reached. We think of Moses (Heb. xi. 24–27), of the Apostles (Acts iv. 19, 20), and of Luther before the Diet of Worms, as heroes; but *they* had no such thought—their only thought was that of fidelity to duty; and it is thus only that true heroism can be reached (P. D. 1189). 2. Let us day by day commit ourselves to the guidance of God, praying Him to strengthen our understanding, to quicken our conscience, to sanctify our desires, and so to "work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Irreligious Piety.

vii. 12. "*But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.*"

Ahaz here poses as a better man than the prophet. He refuses to follow the direction which Isaiah has given him, and refuses, because, he alleges, to do so would be wrong. His disregard of what he knows to be a Divine direction, he covers by an appeal to a general principle which God has been pleased to give for our guidance (Deut. vi. 16). Thus he sought to silence the reproaches of conscience within, and of good men without. We may take him as the representative of that large class of persons who for their actions assign reasons that really are not their governing motives, and cover wrong actions by what appear to be cloaks of righteousness, but really are cloaks of hypocrisy.

How numerous these people are! We find them in all ranks of life; there is this skilful use of pretexts in all realms of human activity. 1. Social life,—*e.g.*, A man rejects a suitor for his daughter's hand, the suitor being forty-five years of age and the daughter twenty-two, professedly for the excellent reason that too great a disparity in age between man and wife is not desirable, but really because the suitor is not sufficiently wealthy. 2. Business,—*e.g.*, A man refuses to become security for another, because, he says, he has entered an undertaking with his partners not to incur any such responsibility, and because it is important that deeds of partnership should be honourably observed; really because he has no wish to oblige the man who asks his aid. 3. Politics.—Why, this is a form of activity which has to a large extent ceased to be care for the welfare of the city or of the community, and has to the same extent become a game of pretexts, in which broad and great principles are used to cover petty and personal ends. 4. Religion.—Alas! into this realm also men carry the same spirit and practices. Let us look at some of the prevalent forms of irreligious piety. (1.) There is the man who will not make any confession of Christ, because "religion is a thing between a man's own soul and God." (2.) There is the man who will not join the church, because the members of the church are so inconsistent, and inconsistent Christians are among the greatest of all hindrances to the progress of Christianity. (3.) There is the man who never attends a week-evening service, because "there is no real religion in neglecting one's daily duties, and we are expressly told that we are to be diligent in business." The same man, however, finds it neither impossible nor inconsistent with his duties to attend political meetings and popular

concerts. (4.) There is the man who never subscribes to any foreign missionary society, because "religion, like charity, should begin at home, and even in this so-called Christian land there are millions of practical heathen who need to have the Gospel preached to them." How much does this man contribute towards home missions? (5.) There is the man who will not contribute to any church-building fund, because he does not "believe in bricks and mortar," and because "true religion before God and the Father is—not to build costly sanctuaries—but to help the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (cf. John xii. 4–6). (6.) There is the man who has no hesitation in joining in a Sunday excursion, because "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," and because—the two pleas almost always go together—"it is possible to worship God as truly in the great temple of nature as in any temple built by man." Picture the man as he actually "worships God in the great temple of nature;" and inquire how he feels on Monday after what he calls "a little relaxation on the Sunday." (7.) There is the man who indulges freely in what many people consider worldly amusements, because "it is not well to be too strait-laced; Solomon, indeed, warns us against being righteous overmuch; and there is nothing so likely as Pharisaism to disgust young people with religion" (H. E. I. 5038–5043).

So we might go on with this miserable catalogue. Satan, we are told, appears sometimes in the guise of an angel of light, and in this respect his children are wonderfully like him; they are marvellously ingenious in using holy principles to cover unholy purposes. But what does all this ingenuity amount to? Whom do they succeed in deceiving? Not men for any length of time. The wolf never succeeds in long completely covering itself with the sheep's clothing. The mask of the hypocrite will slip aside. And when it does so, men despise him for wearing it. Did he show himself as he is, men might, would, condemn him; but they would not despise him so much. And God—He is never deceived. He loathes the false pretenders to righteousness; and ere long He will strip them bare, and expose them to the execration of the universe (H. E. I., 3017–3032; P. D., 1923, 1924, 1930).

What is the practical lesson to be learned from the whole? To pray that God will help us in all things to be sincere; to live "as seeing Him who is invisible," remembering that *He* sees what is invisible—the motives underlying the actions that are seen of men. Nothing else can win for us from Christ the priceless commendation, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

Trials of the Divine Patience.

vii. 13. *Will ye weary my God also?*

In this chapter we are told under what circumstances this question came to be asked. An astonishing assumption underlies it, viz., that anything can be a weariness to God, that anything can be a trial of the Divine patience. Let us think of this.

I. It is a wonderful and glorious thing that there is a Divine patience to be tried. This is a distinctively Biblical idea. Uninstructed by the Scriptures, men naturally think of God as doing as He pleases and when He pleases,—His pleasure being always a selfish one; a Divinity of Power who permits nothing to arrest or delay His purposes, crushing every obstacle as an express train dashes through or over a flock of sheep that has strayed on to its track. Or if men seem with impunity for a time to disregard or defy Him, this is only because He is indifferent to them, caring nothing what they do, because He knows that whensoever He pleases He can destroy them. But in this Book we are

taught to think of Him as profoundly interested in what men do, as grieved and provoked by what they do, and as not merely resisting the impulse to destroy them, but as feeling no such impulse; as longing over them with yearning desire that they would, by repentance and reformation, render it possible for Him righteously to abstain from dealing with them according to their deserts. The *forbearance* of God is a conception which we find only in this book, and that should excite our wonder, our thankfulness, our love. This forbearance of God—this marvellous Divine patience with sinful men—what is its secret and explanation? It is the *love* which God has for us. Love is slow to strike (α).

II. **It is a sad and terrible thing that the Divine patience should be tried.** There are some offences that are horrible, because they outrage even our imperfect sense of what is fitting, *e.g.*, to falsely direct a blind man, so that he shall fall over a precipice; to kill a hunted creature that has fled to us for protection. But of all these outrages, the vilest are sins against love. This is the supremely loathsome thing in seduction, that it is a sin against uninstructed but trustful love. Our whole soul rises in disgust against the brutal wretch who smites to the earth the mother who bore and nursed him. But when we think of what God is, as He is presented to us in Scripture, we see that that heedlessness to His appeals, and warnings, and entreaties, of which we are apt to think so little, is really a horrible offence, because it is a sin against a love the depth and tenderness of which is but faintly imaged forth to us by the purest and most fervent human affection. Persistence in wrong-doing—we see its hatefulness even when it is maintained in spite of human love: the prodigal hardening himself against his mother's entreaties to reform. But what must we say of it as maintained against the entreaties of a love that is more sensitive than any mother's, and that it is rendered so wonderful by the fact that it is associated with a power that could instantly destroy? It is so startling and so horrible that it ought to be impossible. But—

III. **The Divine patience is often tried.** Sins against it are common. In this respect Ahaz does not stand alone. Men commit such sins without compunction. Have we not done so? With what contempt and indifference we have treated God's expostulations with us! We have deferred the duty of repentance. Why? Very much because we know that God is patient, and will not be swift to take vengeance upon us. We have practised on His forbearance, and thus have been guilty of the basest crime that is possible; we have deliberately sinned against love. Yet we are not troubled; so possible is it to drug conscience; so delusive is peace of conscience in the impenitent. But let us look at our conduct as God must regard it, as any reasonable and holy intelligence must regard it, and let us humble ourselves before Him against whom we have sinned so basely (β).

IV. **Those who tire out the Divine patience shall find themselves righteously confronted by the Divine justice** (γ). God will not be permanently mocked. He would be unworthy of His position if He permitted sin to go unpunished (δ). What the punishment of sin is we do not know, because we are now living in an economy in which justice is tempered by mercy. Yet in the calamities and unspeakable woes that here and now befall obdurate transgressors, we have some faint intimation of what will be their doom when, having rejected mercy, they find themselves given over to the unmitigated rigours of justice. Of these things God has spoken, because He would save us from them. All the threatenings of Scripture are merciful warnings (ε). Let us give heed to them, and return to Him who has declared with equal clearness and emphasis that He will by no means clear the guilty, and that He has no delight in the death of the sinner (ζ).

(α) H. E. I. 2295.

(β) H. E. I. 2350.

Where men are bent upon wrong, there is always a strong tendency to elect a character of God that is not very just, but that is very kind—so kind that behind it they may gain some security in their wrong course. And when God's long-suffering and patience are opened up to men they often say, "Well, if God is a being that is tender and loving, I need not be in a hurry to leave off my evil ways. He will bear with me a little longer, and I do not believe that He will account with me for my petty transgressions." Men deliberately employ God's mercy and goodness to violate His feelings. . . . That is infernal; it is inhuman, because kindness seems to lay almost every man under a debt of gratitude. A dog, even, feels itself laid under a debt of gratitude by kindness. It is only men who are corrupted that would ever think of making goodness, and kindness, and generosity towards them the ground on which to base a violation of these qualities. And yet hundreds say, "God is good, and we will go on a little while longer in sin." Yes, He is infinitely good. He has been patient with you; He has longed for you; He has sent ten thousand invisible mercies to you, besides those visible mercies he has showered upon you; He has been long-suffering and forgiving; He has sunk in the depths of the sea thrice ten thousands of transgressions; He did it yesterday, He is doing it to-day, and He will do it to-morrow; and shall you argue with yourself that because God is so good you will go on and insult Him, and wound Him, and injure Him? Or shall the goodness of God lead you to repentance and newness of life? I beseech of you, for the sake of honour and manhood, do not tread upon God's goodness, and generosity, and magnanimity to offend Him more.—*Beecher.*

(γ) H. E. I. 2296–2301, 2349.

(δ) H. E. I. 2316, 2317.

(ε) H. E. I. 604, 605.

(θ) H. E. I. 2283, 2284.

THE VIRGIN'S SON.

vii. 13–16. *And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David, &c.*

On this supremely difficult passage Dr. Kennicott preached a remarkable sermon before the University of Oxford, on the 19th of May 1765. As this sermon is not readily accessible, I here give some extracts from it.

Concerning these words there have been the four following opinions:—

I. That the whole passage relates only to a son of Isaiah.

II. That the whole passage relates only to CHRIST.

III. That the whole passage relates both to Isaiah's son and to CHRIST; to the former in a primary and literal sense, and in a secondary sense to the latter.

IV. That there are here *two* prophecies, each literal, and each to be understood in one sense only: the first relating to CHRIST, the second to Isaiah's son.

The first of these opinions is strenuously contended for by Jews and Deists, who, by confining this passage wholly to Isaiah's son, have attempted to derogate from the authority of St. Matthew, who applies it as a prophecy to CHRIST. But the word here translated *virgin* signifies, in every other part of the Old Testament, *a woman who hath not known man.* And the consequence from hence is, that the words "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," cannot be applied properly to Isaiah's wife. As it is here affirmed that the original word signifies a *virgin* in every other text, it should be just observed that the text in the book of Proverbs (xxx. 18, 19), which has been often brought to prove the contrary, is not here forgotten; and that even *that* text might (if the nature of this discourse would permit) be explained fairly and to satisfaction, in a manner perfectly consistent with the preceding assertion.

If it should be objected, that the original words are not future, and therefore not likely to point out an event so very distant as the birth of CHRIST, it may be answered that the words are, strictly translated, "Behold! a virgin is conceiving and bearing a son," &c. This mode of speech is the animated but customary style of prophetic Scripture, which, in order to express the greatest certainty, describes future events as *past*, or paints future scenes as *present* to the eye. Thus the same prophet, in his most magnificent predictions of the Messiah's birth, exultingly cries, "Unto us a child is BORN, unto us a son IS GIVEN:" and afterwards, in his pathetic description of the Messiah's sufferings, "He is despised and rejected of men. . . . . Surely He HATH BORNE our griefs," &c. But though no argument can be drawn against the Christian sense of these prophetic words from their expressing the then present time, yet an argument of great weight may, and must be, formed upon this very circumstance, in proof of what is here contended for. And certainly, if the words mean "*a virgin is conceiving*," a woman conceiving and yet a virgin! this wonderful circumstance was true as to the Virgin Mary, but it was true as to no other woman.

To these remarks upon the original language must be added one arising from the circumstances of the text, for we learn from thence likewise that Isaiah's wife and the birth of a child in the common way cannot have been here intended. And an appeal may safely be made to persons of sense, though wholly unacquainted with the Hebrew language, whether it is at all probable that the prophet should address himself to the house of David so solemnly, on so interesting an occasion; should awaken their attention; should raise their wonder; should promise them in the name of GOD a *sign* or *miracle;* should mention the future son, not of a *man* (as usual) but of a *woman*, and call that woman *a virgin;* and should foretell the Birth of IMMANUEL, *i.e.*, GOD WITH US—and yet that no more was meant by all this than that *a son should be born of a young married woman*, which is evidently no wonder, no miracle, at all.

If then, from the constant signification of the noun for *virgin*, from the expression of the words in the *present* tense, and from the nature of the context, a son of Isaiah by his wife cannot have been here meant; and if the first opinion be consequently proved indefensible, we may now proceed to consider the *second*, which is that the whole passage of the text relates only to CHRIST.

But these words cannot be wholly applied to an event distant by more than seven hundred years, because the concluding clause speaks of a child either then born, or to be born soon; and before the child so spoken of should be old enough to distinguish natural good from evil, the two kings then advancing against Jerusalem were to be themselves destroyed.

The *third* is the opinion of those who contend for a *double* completion of some prophecies, and insist that this whole passage relates both to Isaiah's son and to CHRIST; to the former in a primary and literal sense, and in a secondary sense to the latter. But—not to enter into that extensive question, whether though some prophecies relate solely to the Messiah, others may, or may not, be doubly fulfilled—I shall only observe, that no such double completion can possibly take place here.

Wherever a secondary sense is insisted on, there we must have a primary sense also which is at least *true*. But the present case renders that impossible. Because, if the principal noun does everywhere else signify a *virgin;* and if it be here meant of the Virgin Mary, and was afterwards properly applied to *her*, it cannot with any truth be applied to the wife of Isaiah. And further, if it were possible for *every other* prophecy to admit of a double completion, yet will not *this*—because a child's being conceived and born of a virgin happened in the world only *once;* and therefore, as this prophecy derives its force from specifying a case *singular and without example*, it can be fulfilled in *one* sense only.

There remains then the *fourth* opinion, which is, that the text contains *two* distinct prophecies, each literal, and each to be understood in one sense only; the first relating to CHRIST, the second to Isaiah's son. This, which is the opinion of some eminent defenders of Christianity, will (I presume) appear true and satisfactory, when the end of the first prophecy, and the beginning of the second, shall have been properly considered; and when some proofs which seem absolutely necessary, but perhaps were never yet produced, shall have been added to former observations.

The genuine sense of this passage depending greatly on the circumstances of those to whom it was delivered, it is here necessary to state the history.

Ahaz became king of Judah when the people were greatly corrupted, and he himself was strongly inclined to idolatry. To correct, therefore, both king and people, God permitted a powerful confederacy to take place between Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel; who, growing jealous of their formidable neighbour, invaded Judæa in the first year of Ahaz; and so successfully, that above 100,000 of the men of Ahaz were slain in one battle, and above 200,000 of his people were carried captives into the land of Israel.

Flushed with these successes, the two kings thought that Jerusalem itself would soon become an easy prey to their power; and in the second year of Ahaz marched towards it, with a resolution totally to abolish the royal succession, which had been for twelve generations in the house of David, and to establish, in the holy city, a heathen king, a Syrian, "the son of Tabeal."

At the approach of these confederates, "the heart of Ahaz was moved, and the hearts of all his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." The consternation was universal, and no wonder. For the young king and the corrupt part of his people would easily be led, from the sufferings they had felt, to fear greater. And the religious part of the nation would entertain fears still more alarming, fears of the extinction of the house of David; for were that house to fail, then farewell to all their glorious hopes of a Messiah, a son of David, who was to reign for ever. These men, therefore, no doubt, "cried unto the Lord in their distresses," and expostulated with Him concerning "the sure mercies of David:" "Lord, where are Thy old lovingkindnesses, which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth?"

Amidst these distresses, we find Ahaz "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool," probably surveying that chief source of their water, and contriving how to secure that water to the city, and defend it against the enemy. At this place, constantly frequented by the people, and then visited by the king, attended probably by the chiefs of his family, Isaiah is commanded to meet him, taking with him Shear-jashub, and to declare in the name of Jehovah, that the evil counsel against Jerusalem should not come to pass.

The counsel of these kings was evil, because, in opposition to God's appointment of the royal house of David, and His promises thereto (particularly of Messiah, the Prince, to spring from thence), their compact was, probably, like Eastern conquerors, to destroy the house of David; certainly, to remove the house of David from the throne, and to fix in the holy city a heathen king.

The prophet, having declared to Ahaz that the scheme of the confederates should be frustrated, bids him, at the command of God, ask some sign or miracle, either in heaven or on earth. "But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah."

The king's disobedience, however coloured over with a specious piety in his allusion to a text of Scripture, appears from the next words of the prophet to have been highly censurable. And it probably proceeded from his distrust either of the power or the favour of Jehovah, after Judæa had suffered so much from these same enemies who worshipped other gods.

Thus repulsed by the king, the prophet addresses himself at large to "the house of David;" and probably there were then present other persons of the royal family. "Hear ye now, O house of David," &c.

The word "*Therefore*" (ver. 14) may, upon good authority, be translated "*nevertheless*," a sense very applicable to this place. A sign or miracle hath been now offered at the command of God, but is refused; and can *you* think it of little moment to treat with such contempt both the prophet and his God? "*Nevertheless*, the Lord Himself will give to *you* the sign following: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and call His name IMMANUEL. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

Here, I presume, ends this first prophecy, and the meaning may be stated thus: "Fear not, O house of David, the fate threatened you. God is mindful of His promise to your father, and will fulfil it in a very wonderful manner. Behold, a virgin (rather, THE virgin, the only one thus circumstanced) shall conceive, and bear a son; which son shall therefore be what no other has been or shall be, the seed of the woman, here styled THE VIRGIN; and this son 'shall be called' (*i.e.*, in Scripture language, *He shall be*) IMMANUEL, God with us. But this great Person, this GOD visible amongst men, introduced into the world thus, in a manner that is without example, shall yet be truly *Man*. He shall be born an infant, and as an infant shall He be brought up; for 'butter and honey' (rather, milk and honey) shall He eat,—He shall be fed with the common food of infants, which in the East was milk mixed with honey, till He shall know (*not* that He *may* know, as if such food were to be the cause of such knowledge, but *till* He shall grow up to know) how to refuse the evil and choose the good."

Here, then, we find a comprehensive description of the Messiah, of the "Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us." His Divinity is marked by His being GOD; His residence upon earth, by His being GOD WITH US; and His Humanity, by His being born of a woman, and fed with the usual food of infants during His infant state. How perfect is the harmony between the parts of this description and the marks of the true Messiah in other sacred passages; and also between the first prophecy in the very beginning of the Old Testament and the completion of it, first mentioned in the very beginning of the New!

For the first promise of a Messiah was, that He should be (not the seed of Adam, as He would have been called, if to descend from a human father, but) "the seed of the woman," because He was to be born of a virgin. Therefore, the Apostle says, "When the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman." And that it was GOD, not man, who was to "prepare a body" for the Messiah, appears from the fortieth Psalm, according to the Apostle's very remarkable quotation of it, where the Messiah is prophetically represented as saying unto God: "A body didst Thou prepare for Me; then said I, Lo, I come; as in the volume of the Book it is written concerning Me."

Having thus endeavoured to illustrate the first prophecy contained in the text, and to defend the application of it to the Virgin Mary's conception and birth of Jesus Christ, I shall now briefly state the second prophecy, which is thus expressed in our present translation, "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."

Now, that this verse contains a distinct prophecy may be proved thus—

1. The words preceding have been proved to be confined to the Messiah, whose birth was then distant above seven hundred years; whereas, the words *here* are confined to some child who was not to arrive at years of discretion before the two kings, then advancing against Jerusalem, should be themselves cut off.

2. Some end was undoubtedly to be answered by the presence of Isaiah's son, whom God commanded to take with him on this visit to Ahaz: and yet no use at all appears to have been made of this son, unless he be referred to here.

3. These prophecies are manifestly distinguished by their being addressed to different persons: the first being *plural*, and addressed to the house of David; but the second is *singular*, and therefore is addressed to Ahaz.

We see, then, that the prophet addressed himself at large to the "house of David," when he foretold the birth of the Messiah; which, though the event might be very distant, would give present consolation, as it assured them of the preservation of the house of David; but that he addressed himself in

particular to the king, when he foretold the speedy destruction of the two kings, his enemies. Note also, that King Ahaz is the person addressed in the very words which immediately follow, "The Lord shall bring upon thee and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days," &c.

This transition will be the more evident if we render the first word *But*, as the same word is rendered just before in this same passage: "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, *but* will ye weary my God also?" It is so rendered in this very place in our old English Bibles, printed in 1535, 1537, 1539, 1549, 1550.

The word also now rendered "*the child*," should be here rendered "THIS *child*;" and the sense of the verse may be then clearly ascertained.

The necessity for this last rendering has been observed by more than one expositor, but perhaps no one has quoted any parallel instance, or produced proper authority for this necessary change of our translation. But, that we may not be charged with offering violence to an expression, in order to defend the Evangelists or to confute their adversaries, some authority should be produced in a point on which so much depends, and I shall mention several passages similar to the case now before us.

When Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons, he laid his hands upon their heads, and used the very same word in the plural number which Isaiah here uses in the singular; and as that word is rendered "*these* children" by the authors of the Greek and other very ancient versions, we have their joint authorities for rendering the word here "*this* child."

The authors of our own translation have not indeed rendered the word in the text "*this* child," but they have shown that it *may* be so rendered, because they have themselves, in several other places, expressed the emphatic article by *this* and *that* in the singular number, and by *these* in the plural. Thus in Jeremiah xxiii. 21, "I have not sent *these* prophets;" in Numbers xi. 6, "There is nothing before our eyes, but *this* manna;" in 1 Samuel xxix. 4, "Make *this* fellow to return;" and, to omit other instances, we read in Jeremiah xxviii. 16 (what it is impossible to translate otherwise), "*This* year thou shalt die."

But besides these instances, in which similar words *may* and *must* be so rendered, agreeably to our present translation, in this same verse of Isaiah there is the authority of our old English translation for both the alterations here proposed; for the very first printed edition, and at least two others, render these words, "*But* or ever *that* child," &c. And, to obviate any prejudice against the other alteration before proposed, it should be observed that, so far from their being now first thought of to favour any new opinions, almost all of them are the very readings in our former English Bibles, from which our present has varied in this and other instances very improperly.

The translation of the principal word here by *this child* being thus vindicated, it may perhaps be asked who this child was, and the answer is, A son of Isaiah, called *Shear-jashub*, whom God had commanded the prophet to take with him upon this occasion, but of whom no use was made, unless in the application of these words;—whom Isaiah might now hold in his arm, and to whom therefore he might point with his hand when he addressed himself to Ahaz, and said, "But before *this* child shall grow up to discern good from evil, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." There is an absolute necessity of attending to this action in several other sacred passages, as in John ii. 18, 19. "What sign showest Thou? . . . Destroy this temple;" our Lord there pointing to His own body.

The child's name is evidently prophetical, for it signifies *a remnant*, or the remainder, *shall return*. And probably he was so called because born the year before, when such multitudes were carried captives into the land of Israel; and this by way of prediction to the Jews that, though they had lost 100,000 men by the sword in one day, and double that number by captivity, yet those who remained alive—the *remnant*—certainly should return to their own country.

This prophecy was soon after fulfilled. And therefore this son, whose name had been so consolatory the year before, was with the utmost propriety brought forth now, and made the subject of a second prophecy—namely, that before *that* child, then in the second year of his age, should be able to distinguish natural good from evil—before he should be about four or five years old—the lands of Syria and Israel, spoken of here as one kingdom, on account of their present union and confederacy, should be "forsaken of both her kings:" which, though at the time highly improbable, came to pass about two years afterwards, when those two kings, who had in vain attempted to conquer Jerusalem, were themselves destroyed, each in his own country.

"If the miraculous birth of Christ were true, yet how could an event so very distant be properly a *sign*, at the time when the prophecy was delivered?"

To this natural and important question, Dr. Kennicott answers:—

The original word for a *sign* means also a *miracle*. And as God had offered *Ahaz* a miracle to be *then* performed, which had been refused, God Himself promises to *the house of David* a miracle which should be performed, not then, but *afterwards*. But the word signifies, not only something done at present, to induce a belief of something future, but also something to be done afterwards, declared beforehand in confirmation of something foretold.

Thus, when God commanded Moses to go from the wilderness into Egypt, to demand the dismission of his brethren, God assures

him of success, and tells him: "This shall be *a sign* unto thee; when thou hast brought forth the people, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

And thus, when the Assyrians were marching against Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah, Isaiah is again commanded to declare that the city shall not be taken; and after saying, "This shall be *a sign* unto you," he specifies several particulars which were all future (a).

If then a thing, at all future, may be declared as a *sign*, it makes no difference whether the thing be future by three years or three hundred, provided that one circumstance be observed—which is, that the man, or body of men, to whom the fact is declared to be a sign shall exist to see the thing accomplished. This was manifestly the case here. For not only Ahaz, to whom the second prophecy was delivered, saw that fulfilled as to the two kings his enemies, but also the house of David, to whom the first prophecy was addressed, saw *that* fulfilled in JESUS CHRIST.

(a) Compare also our Lord's treatment of the demand for a sign, Matt. xii. 38–40. In this case also, to unbelievers, was given a "sign" which they could not possibly have understood when it was given.

IMMANUEL.

vii. 14. *And shall call His name Immanuel.*

His being "called so," according to the usual dialect of the Hebrew, does not signify so much that this should be His usual name, as that this should be His real character.

I. Explain the meaning of this great and extraordinary title, IMMANUEL (*cf.* viii. 8 and Matt. i. 23). This title may be considered under a double reference, either, 1. To the constitution of His person; or, 2. To His office and actings as mediator. 1. It is one of the great mysteries of the Christian revelation that "God was manifest in the flesh." The eternal Son of God became man, and was both God and man in His own person. In a matter of pure revelation, and of so sublime a nature, it is certainly the wisest and safest course to keep close to the revelation, and make it the standard and measure of all our conceptions about it. 2. As mediator, He is *Immanuel* in this sense, that in Him the presence and favour of God with His people are most eminent and conspicuous. This has always been true, is true now, and always will be true. (1.) As a distant friend is said to be "with us" whose heart and thoughts are with us (1 Cor. v. 3), so Christ was *Immanuel* from all eternity as to His purpose and design of mercy, and as His heart was towards us with thoughts of pleasure (Prov. xxix. 30). (2.) All the appearances of God to His people under the Old Dispensation were appearances of Christ (John i. 18, v. 37; 2 Cor. iv. 6). 3. As He took our nature and became man. This is the essential and highest meaning of our text. He took upon Him *our* nature, with all its parts and powers, all its natural affections and infirmities, sin only excepted. 4. As He conversed with men, and revealed the will of God to them. 5. As He offered Himself a sacrifice for sin, and reconciled God and man together. This is mentioned by the Evangelist in the same context (Matt. i. 21). This was the great end of His taking our nature, and coming into the world (Heb. v. 9). 6. As He gives His Spirit to every true believer, and is powerfully present with them to the end of the world. He is present in them, on the principle of Divine life in their souls (John xiv. 16; Ephes. iii. 17). He is present with them whensoever they assemble to hear His Word or observe His ordinances (Matt. xviii. 20; John xx. 19). He is always present with His Church to preserve and succour it. 7. As He will be the visible Judge of the world at last; He will be Judge in our nature who was Saviour of our nature (John v. 22; Acts xvii. 13). 8. He will be the glorious and triumphant Head of the redeemed world for ever. Their happiness will lie very much in being with Him and beholding His glory; and their employment in adoring love and triumphant praise.

II. Consider why this declaration

fills the hearts of God's people with joy. 1. God is here presented to us as we need Him. God absolutely considered is an awful name; the Divine majesty is bright and glorious, apt to strike an awe upon our minds, to awaken a sense of guilt, and keep us at a distance from Him (Gen. iii. 10; Deut. xxviii. 58; Job xiii. 21). But now He is *God with us*, God in our nature, conversing with sinful men, and concerned for their good; this abates the natural dread of our minds, and is a ground of holy freedom towards Him (Eph. ii. 18; iii. 12). 2. The union in Christ of all Divine and human perfections—(1) Is the reason of our worship and adoration of Him; (2) Is the proper ground of confidence and trust in Him. We may safely depend upon Him for the accomplishment of His promises and the salvation of our souls, for He is an all-sufficient Saviour. 3. By this great doctrine the solemnity of our future life is relieved. The consideration of Immanuel, or God, in our nature, has been found by pious and devout persons a great relief to their thoughts of the final blessedness; we can conceive with greater ease, and with a more sensible pleasure, of being with Christ than of being with the absolute Deity.

III. Consider some of the duties which arise out of this wonderful and glorious fact. 1. Let us adore the amazing condescension of our blessed Redeemer, who stooped from heaven to earth, consented to become a man, and submitted to die a sacrifice (Phil. ii. 7, 8). 2. Let us maintain constantly and boldly before all men the doctrine of His Deity. If He were only a man, or only a creature, of how a rank soever and however dignified, He could not be *God with us;* He could not restore the fallen world, or obtain by His sacrifice the pardon of sin, or give eternal life. 3. Be always ready to approach Him. Wait upon Him in all the ways of acceptable worship, for the manifestation of His favour and communication of His grace, for further discoveries of His will, and fresh supplies of His Spirit. Particularly attend upon Him at His *table;* here He is with us in a more familiar and sensible manner in the brightest displays of His mercy and the largest communications of His grace. 4. Regard His presence with you in all your use of the means of grace. 'Tis reckoned a rude affront among men, and a token of great disrespect, to take no notice of a great personage or overlook a superior. Regard His presence with you as a mark of condescending favour, and as the life and soul of all the ordinances you attend upon. This will hallow your thoughts in the use of them, and make them to you "means of grace" indeed. —*W. Harris: Practical Discourses on the Principal Representations of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament*, pp. 275–304.

The Great Object of Child-Training.

(A Sunday-School Anniversary Sermon.)

vii. 15. *The child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*

These words, taken above, form a complete sentence; yet they occur in the clause of a sentence which is intended to denote a space of time. Before the child which Isaiah held in his arms(*a*) should know the difference between right and wrong certain events would take place: in other words, before a space of four or five years at the most would elapse, certain things would occur. But it is not our intention to discuss the prophecy itself; we shall find it more in harmony with the present occasion, and perhaps more profitable, to consider what may be suggested to us by these words thus taken apart from their context.

"*The child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*" There is

nothing else so important for any child to know as this (H. E. I. 1751). Seldom made the object of education; consequently the majority of lives are failures. No child knows this without training: the child's natural tendencies are precisely the reverse of this. But, if this training is urgently needed, how immense and difficult is the task of those who undertake to give it! How difficult it often is to discern between what is good and what is evil—in all the realms of thought and activity; especially in the moral realm. The difficulty of the task is not to cause us to decline it. We have wonderful helps in it. 1. GOD'S WORD. What a wonderful help that is! What a proof that in the Bible we have God's word is this, that for helpfulness in this task no other book can be compared with it (H. E. I., 506, 508, 509). Our text reminds us of what should be our object in the Scriptural teaching we give our children. What value is there in any so-called Scriptural instruction that does not tend to cultivate spiritual discernment—hate of what is evil, and love of what is good? 2. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST, "the law drawn out in living characters." Let us not overlook or neglect to use this marvellous instrumentality and help. 3. THE HOLY SPIRIT. Always ready to co-operate with us. Christian parents, let the remembrance of these helps encourage you to resume this supremely important task with fresh vigour. Keep it ever in view, aim at the whole of it. The training which consists merely in fighting against evil is foredoomed to fail. The child must be taught, not merely to refuse the evil, but to choose the good. Do not be content in the field of your child's heart merely to plough up the weeds; sow there the corn which, when it is full grown, shall overshadow and kill the weeds which, in spite of all your efforts, will struggle for a place there. In those who undertake to give this training, there is imperative need of seriousness, humility, hopefulness, and a wise comprehensiveness. Consider what will be the results of success in child-training such as this. 1. Our children will be spared from indescribable misery. 2. They will grow continually in all that is noble and love-worthy. 3. Learning to choose what is good, they will necessarily choose God as He has been thus revealed to us in Jesus Christ. 4. Beholding them thus allied in heart and will to the supreme source of all goodness, and daily becoming more like Him, we shall feel that all our labours and sacrifices for them are overpaid.

(a) See the paper entitled THE VIRGIN'S SON.

A SENTENCE OF DOOM.

vii. 17–25. *The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, &c.*

I. God is sovereign in the whole earth. He is the great controller of all nations. All governments are but instruments which He uses when and as He pleases (vers. 17–21). A thought full of comfort for the righteous, of terror for the unrighteous.

II. The consequent insecurity of all prosperity that is not based upon, and promotive of, righteousness (ver. 23). True of nations: Britain will be "*Great* Britain" only so long as God pleases. True of individuals: (H. E. I. 3991, 4403-4406).

III. Whatever chastisements God may have inflicted, He has always a more terrible one behind (ver. 17).

IV. Seeing that all these things were threatened against and inflicted upon God's chosen people, learn that no mercy that God has shown us will furnish any immunity for us, if, notwithstanding that mercy, we sin against Him. There is a tendency in our evil hearts to think, that because God has been specially good to us, we may sin with less risk than others; but the teaching of the Bible is, that those who "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness" shall be visited with a sorer doom than others (H. E. I. 4564, 4568, 4570)

MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ.

viii. 1–4. *Moreover, the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll, &c.* (α).

This singular record reminds us, I. How marvellously varied are the means which God employs to bring men to the knowledge and belief of saving truth. That which God's ancient people needed to save them from their mistakes and miseries was real faith in the elementary truth that God is the only safe counsellor, for this simple reason, that He alone sees the end from the beginning. All their circumstances, interpreted by merely human wisdom, seemed to point to the desirableness of an alliance with Assyria, the very thing which God by His prophets emphatically forbade. That it might be easier for them to believe what seemed so incredible, namely, that the Assyrian alliance would be a calamity and not a blessing to them, God gave, in addition to the testimonies of His prophets to this effect, a prophecy of an event seemingly as incredible, namely, that the great power of the two nations, Israel and Syria, from which they had suffered so much, and which seemed so likely to be permanent, and on account of which they sought Assyrian help, should be utterly broken, and that speedily. God predicted this in words (chap. vii. 4–9), and He condescended to a symbolic act that He might impress this truth more vividly on their minds. It is of that symbolic act that we have the record here. Now that God took so much trouble for such a purpose is a fact worth thinking about. As a matter of fact, it is but one instance of His constant method of dealing with men. He is so bent on bringing them to a knowledge and belief of truth that to them would be saving, that He shrinks from no trouble at all likely to secure this result (Jer. vii. 13, 25; Heb. i. 1; Luke xx. 10–13). Illustrate, *e.g.*, how various are the methods by which He endeavours to awaken a careless soul to anxiety, and to effect its conversion! What is the explanation of this versatility and ingenuity of methods in dealing with us? It is the tenderness of His love for us; it is His yearning solicitude for our welfare.

II. How mercifully clear are the warnings by which God seeks to turn men from ruinous courses. The tablet (β) on which Isaiah was to write was to be large, and he was to write upon it "with a man's pen," an obscure expression, but yet at least meaning this, that the writing upon it was to be easily legible (Hab. ii. 2). It is true that though the words on the tablet were easily legible, their meaning was obscure. But that very obscurity was of a kind to excite inquiry (Dan. v. 5–7), and that inquiry earnestly and honestly conducted would have led God's ancient people to a saving knowledge of truth. Thus it is with all the warnings contained in God's Word (H. E. I. 602–606).

III. How important it is that God's servants should be prudent as well as zealous. After the prophecy was fulfilled, unbelief might have questioned whether it had ever been given, and therefore Isaiah, acting under divine direction, selected two witnesses whose testimony could not be gainsaid (γ). Probably that which they were required to testify was, that the prophecy, *and its interpretation*, was delivered to them on a certain day; the interpretation embracing both the facts, that to the prophet another son would be born, and that while still in his infancy the two nations of which Judah stood in dread should themselves be conquered. Isaiah was thus acting on the general principle given by our Lord for the guidance of His people (Matt. x. 16). Now, as then, His prophets, while loyally obedient to His directions, should maintain a constant wariness and prudence, in order that the testimony they bear for Him should be placed beyond cavil and dispute.

IV. How certain of accomplishment are the prophecies involved in God-given names. The prophecy contained

in the name bestowed on this child of Isaiah's was fulfilled (δ). So already had that implied in the name bestowed on the child previously born to him, *Shear-jashub*, "a remnant shall return" (ε). As it was with the sons of Isaiah, so is it with the Son of God. The names bestowed on Him are not merely glorious but empty titles. He is in very truth JESUS and IMMANUEL (Matt. i. 21–23). He is JESUS because IMMANUEL. On the promises involved in these great names we may lay hold with joyful confidence, for they also shall be fulfilled.

(α) **In the first chapter of Hosea occurs a like instance of symbolic names given by a prophet to his children, and in Habakkuk ii. 2, we have mention of the practice of writing a prophecy on a tablet in easily legible characters, and hanging it up in the Temple, market-place, or other public resort. And most modern commentators prefer to think that Isaiah now merely inscribed "HASTE PLUNDER, SPEED SPOIL," in large letters on a metal or waxed tablet, the ל which the Authorised Version translates "concerning," being the *Lamed* inscription is, as in Jerem. xlix. 1, 7, 23, 28; Ezek. xxxvii. 16; though it may be observed that the direction to "tie up and seal the testimony," in ver. 16, is in favour of the older version, which understands him to have made a record of his expectation of the birth of the child, and of the significance of that birth, at some length. He wrote "with a man's pen," or "style,"—a phrase not unlike our "common hand" or "popular style;" and he took as credible witnesses that the record had preceded the event, Uriah the high priest at the time (2 Kings xvi. 10), and Zechariah, who was not improbably the father-in-law of Ahaz and a Levite (2 Kings xviii. 2; 2 Chron. xxix. 1, 13). He calls his wife "the prophetess," as the wife of a king is called a queen (says Vitringa), though she does not reign, and in some old ecclesiastical canons the wife of a bishop "episcopa," and of a presbyter "presbytera;" and he thus claims for her a place with her husband and children (see ver. 18) in the holy and symbolic family, who are for "a sign in Israel." She gave birth to a child, and his name was called, in accordance with the writing, "Haste-plunder, Speed-spoil," that the people might understand that before he was old enough to utter the words "father" and "mother,"—that is, within a short but somewhat indefinite period such as we should express by "in a year or two from his birth,"—the spoils of the plundered cities of Samaria and Damascus, the capitals of the nations now invading Judah, shall have been carried before the Assyrian conqueror in triumph.**

In order to realise the practical impressiveness of such symbolic acts and names upon Isaiah's contemporaries, we must remember that Jerusalem was a very small town for size and population compared with the notion we insensibly get of a capital from our own vast London; and also that there was as little in the ways of thinking and living of that age and country as in the extent of the city to effect such a separation between a public man's political and private life as exists in England. We respect the domestic reserve of our neighbours, and we fortify ourselves in the like reserve, by our habit of learning what they are doing that concerns us through the newspaper which we read by our own fireside. With no newspapers, and a climate which encouraged an out-of-door life, the people of Jerusalem would become as familiar with that personal demeanour of Isaiah in the market-place or elsewhere which he made a part of his public ministry, as we are with the mental habits and political conduct of Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Disraeli, though the greater part of us would recognise neither of them by sight, and still fewer know anything of their personal and private life.—*Strachey.*

(β) ***A great roll.*** **Rather, *a large tablet:* of wood or metal, covered with a smooth surface of wax; which, when written upon, was hung up in public for all to read (cf. Jer. xxxii. 11, 14).—*Kay.***

(γ) ***Faithful witnesses.*** **Or, *sure* witnesses; whose testimony none would be able to gainsay: partly, because of their rank, but still more, it would seem, from their being adherents of Ahaz. For "Uriah the priest" can scarcely be any other than the one who made the Syrian altar after the description sent him from Damascus by Ahaz (2 Kings xvi. 10–16); thereby (as Mr. Birks notices) furnishing incontrovertible evidence of the fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction. Zechariah may have been Ahaz's own father-in-law (2 Chron. xxix. 1).—*Kay.***

(δ) **Isaiah's interview with Ahaz (chap. vii.), the preparation of the tablet, the birth of Isaiah's child, and the conquest of Syria and Israel by the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser all took place within the year 743–739 B.C.**

Alexander **remarks on ver. 4:—"Samaria is here put for the kingdom, and not for the capital city. But even if the name be strictly understood, there is no reason to doubt that Samaria was plundered by Tiglath-pileser (2 Kings xv. 29), although not destroyed. . . . . The carrying away of its wealth does not necessarily imply anything more than such a spoiling of the capital as might be expected in the course of a brief but successful invasion."**

(ε) **See Dr. Kennicott's remarks on *Shear-jashub* in preceding paper: THE VIRGIN'S SON.**

The Stream Rejected for the River.

viii. 5–8. *Forasmuch as this people refuseth, &c.*

For "rejoice *in* Rezim and Remaliah's son," read "rejoice *concerning* Rezim and Remaliah's son," *i.e.*, rejoice in the disaster which had befallen the allied powers who had inflicted such disasters upon Judah, and had threatened it with utter destruction.

We have here a prophecy given in symbols. One of them is explained by the prophet himself. He explains that by "the river" he means the King of Assyria. Commentators are generally of opinion that by "the waters of Shiloah" is meant the Davidic dynasty, which God, on certain conditions, had pledged Himself to maintain. But this put them to hard shifts to explain the rejoicing of the people. It is better to regard "the waters of Shiloah" as symbolical of the help which God offered His people. The contrast then becomes intelligible. Because that help was unseen—apprehensible only by faith—it seemed to the multitudes, when compared with that which the King of Assyria was visibly rendering them, in the overthrow of Syria and Israel, to be as little worthy of consideration as is the little stream of Shiloah (α) in comparison with that mighty river, the Euphrates (β). We have, then, here *the case of men who are rejoicing in a success that is godless*, that has been obtained by the rejection of God; and we are here told what the end of that success must be. Thus we find a theme that bears upon our life to-day.

1. Whatever be our life-work, there are two ways of seeking success in it—with God, or without God. 2. If we take God to be our ally, we must do our work on *His* terms and plans. But these are frequently contrary to our natural expectations, and opposed to what the world calls "common sense." As helps to a speedy and great success, they seem to most men as despicable as the little stream of Shiloah in comparison with the broad river Euphrates. 3. Consequently the vast majority of men reject them, and seek for success without God, and contrary to His methods (H. E. I. 4198). 4. In this way, they frequently speedily attain to a success which appears to be a complete justification of the wisdom of their policy. When the prophecy contained in our text was uttered, the forces of Syria and Israel were being swept away by the triumphant Assyrian host, and no doubt Ahaz and His court felt they could afford to laugh at Isaiah, who had steadily opposed the alliance which appeared to have been so advantageous. 5. But the triumph of the wicked is short. The unholy success in which bad men rejoice contains within itself the seeds of peril and pain, of retribution and ruin (H. E. I. 4609, 4612). The ally in whom Ahaz had trusted presently became his oppressor; it was a verification in actual life of the fable of the horse that took a man for its ally. So is it to-day with all who prosper without God and against God. Their prosperity is, strictly speaking, unnatural, and everything that is unnatural speedily brings on disorder. For example, a family has been enriched by godless plans; to those who have no fear of God in their hearts, there is nothing so perilous as wealth; it is used for the gratification of the baser passions; by this gratification health is broken down; when the physical frame is shattered, conscience, that has been suppressed, breaks forth into freedom and activity, and remorse turns the gilded palace into a hell. The illustrations of the working of this great law are endless.

Practical Applications.—1. In the conduct of daily life, as well as in our spiritual concerns, let us walk by faith, not by sight. God's help, though it may seem inconsiderable as Shiloah's stream, is yet, like that stream, constant. Our reliance upon it will never issue in disappointment. By means of it we shall certainly

attain to all the prosperity that would be for our real wel are (H. E. I. 3984–3986, 5059, 5060). 2. Let us not envy the prosperity of the wicked (H. E. I. 4943–4948, 4961–4966). It is short-lived, like the mighty flood of Euphrates itself. Out of that very prosperity heart-aches innumerable will spring. The rejoicing that is so exultant and scornful to-day, to-morrow will be turned into lamentation and woe. Then those who triumphed without God will find that in defeat they are without Him: this will be their description, "Without God, and without hope in the world." 3. When Jesus of Nazareth was called to choose between the stream and the river, His decision was prompt and unhesitating (Matt. iv. 8–10). Up to the very end of His life His choice seemed to have been a foolish one (Matt. viii. 20); on Calvary it seemed to have been madness; but all history since has been a vindication of its wisdom (Phil. ii. 9, 10).

(α) All accounts combine in asserting that the waters of the two pools of Siloam, as well as that of the many fountains of the "Mosque of Omar," proceed from a spring or reservoir of water beneath the Temple vaults. There was no period of its history when such a provision would not have been important to the Temple for the ablutions of the Jewish, no less than of the Mussulman, worship; or to the city, which else was dry even to a proverb. It was the treasure of Jerusalem, its support through all its numerous sieges, the "fons perennis aquæ" of Tacitus, the source of Milton's

"Brook that flowed
Hard by the oracle of God."

But, more than this, it was the image which entered into the very heart of the prophetical idea of Jerusalem (Ps. xlvi. 4, lxxxvii. 7; Isa. xii. 3). It is the source of all the freshness and verdure of the vale of Hinnom. In Ezekiel's vision the thought is expanded into a vast cataract flowing out through the Temple rock eastward and westward into the ravines of Hinnom and Kedron, till they swell into a mighty river, fertilising the desert of the Dead Sea. And with still greater distinctness the thought appears again, and for the last time, in the discourse, when in the courts of the Temple, "in the last day, that great day of the feast" [of Tabernacles], "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me. . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."—*Stanley.*

The expression in Isaiah, "waters of Shiloah that go softly," seems to point to the slender rivulet, flowing gently, though once very profusely, out of Siloam into the lower breadth of level, where the king's gardens, or "royal paradise," stood, and which is still the greenest spot about the Holy City, reclaimed from sterility into a fair oasis of olive groves, fig-trees, pomegranates, &c., by the tiny rill that flows out of Siloam. A winter-torrent, like the Kedron, or a swelling river like the Euphrates, carries havoc with it by sweeping off soil, trees, and terraces; but this Siloam-fed rill flows softly, fertilising and beautifying the region through which it passes.—*Bonar.*

(β) The Euphrates, *i.e.*, the good and abounding river. The Euphrates is the largest, the longest, and by far the most important of the rivers of Western Asia. It rises from two chief sources in the Armenian mountains . . . . they meet at *Kebben-Maden*, nearly in the long. 39° E. from Greenwich, having run respectively 400 and 270 miles. Here the stream formed by their combined waters is 120 yards wide, rapid, and very deep. . . . The entire course is calculated at 1780 miles, nearly 650 more than that of the Tigris, and only 200 short of that of the Indus; and of this distance more than two-thirds (1200 miles) is navigable for boats, and even, as the expedition of Colonel Chesney proved, for small steamers. The width of the river is greatest at the distance of 700 or 800 miles from its mouth, that is to say, from its junction with the *Khabour* to the village of Werai It there averages 400 yards. . . . The annual inundation of the Euphrates is caused by the melting of the snows in the Armenian highlands. It occurs in the month of May. . . . The Tigris scarcely ever overflows, but the Euphrates inundates large tracts on both sides its course from Hit downwards.—*Rawlinson.*

Considered in a commercial respect, as well as with regard to its uses in agriculture, the Euphrates manifestly stood in the same relation to Babylon and the surrounding region that the Nile did to Egypt; it was the source, to a large extent, of its prosperity, and the most important element of its greatness. It is in this relation that the *symbolical* use of the Euphrates in Scripture proceeds, and by keeping it in view the several passages will be found to admit of an easy explanation. Contributing so materially to the resources and wealth of Babylon, the river was naturally taken for an emblem or representative of the city itself, and of the empire of which it was the capital. In this respect a striking application is made of it by the prophet Isaiah (chap. viii. 5–8), where the little kingdom of Judah, with its circumscribed territory and its few earthly resources, on the one hand, is seen imaged in the tiny brooklet of Shiloah; while, on the other, the rising power of Babylon is spoken of under the emblem of "the waters of the river, strong and many, even the King of Assyria and all his glory." And he goes

on to expose the folly of Israel's [Judah's] trusting in this foreign power on account of its material greatness, by declaring that in consequence of this mistaken trust, and in chastisement of it, the mighty stream would, as it were, desert its proper channel, and turn its waters in a sweeping and desolating flood over the Holy Land.—*Fairbairn.*

The Waters of Shiloah.

viii. 6–8. *Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, &c.*

Reminded, I. That the peaceful blessings of the people of God appear in lovely contrast to the false and tumultuous pursuits and pleasures of the world (H. E. I. 1080–1084, 4163–4168). II. That those who despise and neglect God's promised blessings expose themselves to His severe displeasure.—*Samuel Thodey.*

I. *The state of mind referred to:* A disposition to reject God's promises of salvation, and rest on the hopes, promises, and resources of the world. We see it manifested, 1. In the systems of religion men prefer. 2. In the schemes of worldly aggrandisement they pursue. 3. In the sources of consolation to which they betake themselves (H. E. I. 174). II. *The consequence of continuance in this state of mind.* 1. Mental darkness and sorrow of heart. 2. Providential chastisements. — *Samuel Thodey.*

Threatened, but Safe.

viii. 9, 10. *Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces, &c.*

This is a shout of triumphant defiance which Ahaz and his people might have raised, had they listened to Isaiah's counsels, and turned to the Lord with full purpose of heart. Then they might have been threatened by foes numerous, powerful, determined, and confederated, but they would have been safe. Its doctrine clearly is, that it matters not who may be against us, if God be with us. This has been the faith of God's people in all generations.

I. On what ground does it rest? 1. On what may be regarded as a settled conviction of the human mind, that this world, disordered as it is, is really governed by a righteous Ruler, omnipotent and all-wise, and that it must be well with those who have Him on their side. 2. On the declarations of God's Word (Gen. xv. 1; Ps. xxxiv. 7; Isa. liv. 17, &c.) 3. On the experience of His people as recorded in His Word. The promise to Abraham was kept; David (1 Sam. xvii. 37); Hezekiah (2 Kings xix. 32–35); Daniel and his companions (Dan. vi. 22, iii. 28); Peter (Acts xii. 7). On these accounts His people have felt and expressed the utmost contempt for, and defiance of, their foes (Ps. xxvii. 1–6; Micah vii. 8–10). Old as these utterances are, they express the confidence of countless thousands to-day. But, II. Let us look at the grounds that might cause us to hesitate to receive it. 1. There is the undoubted fact that we are living in a world in which many things happen that are contrary to what we would have expected; and it would be only one more contradiction of our *à priori* expectations if a good man, or a number of good men, were utterly destroyed by a number of bad men. 2. As a matter of fact, this has often happened. Who were "the noble army of martyrs," but good men who suffered intolerable wrongs, and were put to cruel deaths? If Peter was delivered, James, his fellow-apostle, was left to his fate (Acts xii. 2); yea, Peter himself at last died by the hands of the executioner, as did nearly all the Apostles. See what a terrible record of the sufferings of righteous men we have in Heb. xi. 35–37. III. How are these two sets of facts to be harmonised? How account for it that, notwithstanding the latter set, which are obvious and not denied, it is still the settled conviction of pious and otherwise sen-

sible men, that it shall be well with the righteous? 1. This *is* undoubtedly true, on the whole. We see what is the teaching of experience, taken on any considerable scale, in the familiar proverb, "Honesty is the best policy." Deadly as is the conflict between the powers of good and of evil, on the whole, the victory is on the side of goodness, of righteousness, of truth. The world grows better, not worse (H. E. I. 1161, 1162). And it is manifest that "godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well of that which is to come." 2. The exceptions to which our attention is directed are necessary. Without them the difficulties in the way of the existence and growth of virtue would be immensely increased. If those who served God ran no risk in doing so, it would be as difficult for them to show that they loved Him for His own sake, as it would be for soldiers to prove their bravery, if it were possible to send them forth to battle in absolutely impregnable armour. If the safety assured to God's people were absolute and without exceptions, there would be no room for the exercise of faith and loyalty. 3. This life is not all. It is but the prelude to our real existence; and for whatever we suffer in God's cause here, we shall be abundantly compensated hereafter. So that, with Sir Thomas More, we may say, "They may take off my head, but hurt me they cannot."

This is a plain and sober statement of the facts of this great problem. What are the practical inferences to be drawn from it? 1. *Let us dismiss from our minds all fears for the cause of truth and righteousness. That* is safe (2 Cor. xiii. 8). God's Church and God's Word will survive all the assaults that are made upon them (H. E. I. 642–645, 1246–1251, 2449). 2. *Let us not be greatly concerned as to what may happen to ourselves.* If God pleases, He can deliver us from any danger that may threaten us. If He is not pleased to do so, He knows how to make our sufferings promote the cause we have at heart. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" (P. D. 2421, 2422, 2426). 3. *If we are called to suffer, let us rejoice* (Phil. i. 29; 2 Tim. ii. 9; P. D. 2419).

Biblical Politicians.

viii. 11–15. *For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, &c.* (α).

God's people are to be "a peculiar people." Their whole life is to be governed by divine principles. 1. By these principles they will be saved from the grievous practical heresy of abstention from public life (β). Civilised life, especially in a free community, is a partnership, and no man has a right to take all the advantages of a partnership and evade all its labours and obligations. "Owe no man anything." We are bound to labour as well as pray, that God's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. The result of abstention on the part of Christian men from public life is the domination of bad men, and the employment of the resources of the community for evil purposes (Ps. xii. 8). If we need example in this matter, we have the example of the prophets, who were much more than preachers of a monastic piety: they were active politicians, and yet politicians of an utterly unworldly type. 2. By these principles they will be guided and kept amid all the duties and difficulties of public life. They will be uplifted above party spirit in all its narrow and debasing forms. Theirs will be that true patriotism which consists in a steady loyalty to truth, and righteousness, and mercy.

If we are to be Biblical politicians, and this is the duty of every man among us, I. We shall not necessarily be found on the side of the majority (ver. 11). How often God's people have been called to stand in what is called "a miserable minority!" (Exod.

xxiii. 2.) II. We shall not necessarily adopt as our own the popular cries (ver. 12, γ). *Vox populi* is often far other than *Vox Dei*. III. We shall not necessarily share in the prevalent feelings of our time, whether they be those of fear or of hope (ver. 13). We shall know that no permanent hurt can be done to our nation while it is in pursuit of righteousness, and that no real advantage can be gained by methods that will not bear the divine scrutiny. IV. Our supreme desire will be, not to conciliate men, but to please God (ver. 13). We shall consider all public questions, and vote for, or withhold our vote from, all public men, as in His sight (Heb. xi. 27). This may cause us often to cut ourselves off from our "party," but this will not trouble us. Hostility may thus be excited against us—will be excited against us, for such "impracticable men" are the abhorrence of mere politicians; but then God Himself will be to us "for a sanctuary" (δ). V. We shall never lose sight of the fact that the penalty of ungodliness in public life is ruin (vers. 14, 15). The real Ruler of the world is God, who governs it according to a plan of truth, righteousness, and mercy; and every human "policy" which is not consistent therewith, though it may win for its authors a short-lived triumph, will inevitably plunge those who accept it into disaster. From those who fight against God, utter defeat cannot be far off.

When these facts are inwrought into the understandings and consciences of God's people, and have become influential in their public and political life, much will have been done to usher in the millennium for which we daily pray, and of which Isaiah himself has given us such glowing pictures (chaps. ii. 4, xxxii. 16, 17; lx. 17).

(α) There was a general panic among the people: "their heart was moved as the trees of the wood are moved by the wind," when they heard that Syria was confederate with Ephraim; their cry was everywhere, "A confederacy has been made against us, and we must meet it by a counter-alliance with Assyria;" and the prophet says that he too should have fallen under the influence of this panic, if Jehovah had not laid hold of him with a strong hand, to keep him in the way of dependence on Himself, and if He had not taught him to escape the fear which possessed his fellow-countrymen, by making the Lord of hosts his fear and his dread, by sanctifying Him himself, as he now in His Name calls on them to do. To sanctify Jehovah is in mind and practice to recognise Him as the *holy* God, the Lord who is *absolute* (absolutus), free from the limitations which hinder all other beings from carrying their wills into full operation, and to believe with the whole heart that God does and can govern all things according to the counsel of His own will, and that what He determines does certainly come to pass, however probabilities and appearances may be against the belief (Num. xx. 12; Deut xxxii. 51; Isa. xxix. 23). To the nation which thus sanctifies Jehovah, He (says Isaiah) will be their sanctuary—their protection against all their enemies. Such was His original covenant with both the houses of Israel, and it still holds good. If, therefore, they will break and renounce it, it becomes a stumbling-block to them. When their statesmen endeavour to remedy present mischief and secure future prosperity, by craftily playing off against one another the nations whom they cannot hope to match by force, they are attempting to go counter to the whole plan of Jehovah's government, and they will do it only to their own confusion.—*Strachey.*

(β) H. E. I. 4137–4139.

(γ) The prophet, and such as were on his side, were not to call that *kesher* which the great mass of the people called *kesher* (cf. 2 Chron. xxiii. 13, "She said, Treason, treason! *Kesher, kesher!*); . . . the reference is to the conspiracy, as it was called, of the prophet and his disciples. The same thing happened to Isaiah as to Amos (Amos vii. 10) and to Jeremiah. Whenever the prophets were at all zealous in their opposition to the appeal for foreign aid, they were accused and branded as standing in the service of the enemy, and conspiring for the overthrow of the kingdom. —*Delitzsch.*

(δ) *Mikdash* generally means the sanctified place or sanctuary, with which the idea of an asylum would easily associate itself, since even among the Israelites the Temple was regarded and respected as an asylum (1 Kings i. 50; ii. 28). . . . *Mikdash* is really to be taken in this sense, although it cannot be exactly rendered "asylum," since this would improperly limit the meaning of the word. The Temple was not only a place of shelter, but also of grace, blessing, and peace. All who sanctified the Lord of lords He surrounded like temple walls; hid them in Himself, whilst death and tribulation reigned without, and comforted, fed, and blessed them in His own gracious fellowship (chap. iv. 5, 6; Ps. xxvii. 5; xxxi. 20).—*Delitzsch.*

"Hallowed be Thy Name!"

viii. 13. *Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, &c.*

I. What is it to "sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself"? It is, 1. To fill our minds with right thoughts concerning Him (α). 2. To fill our hearts with right feelings towards Him (P. D. 1492–1526). **II. How is this to be done?** By frequent, devout, prayerful, intense meditation on the revelations of Himself which He has been pleased to give (H. E. I. 3507–3514). **III. What will be the effect of doing it?** 1. All other fear and dread will vanish from our minds (1 Sam. xiv. 6, xvii. 37; Jer. xxxii. 17; 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15). 2. Thus we shall unconsciously and inevitably attain to that heroism of which some of us dream (Ps. xvi. 8; Dan. iii. 16–18; Acts iv. 19, 20). 3. Thus we shall be qualified for the noblest service of God and man (Heb. xi. 24–27; 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4). 4. Thus a divine peace and joy will fill our whole being, as a mighty tide fills every nook and cranny of a wide-stretching bay (Ps. civ. 34). We shall rejoice in God as a soldier rejoices in a mighty fortress in which he feels secure from all assaults (2 Sam. xxii. 2, 3).

(α) See note (α) to preceding outline: Biblical Politicians.

God our Refuge, or our Ruin.

viii. 14. *And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, &c.*

In God "we live, and move, and have our being." We cannot be independent of, or indifferent to, Him, as we can in regard to some of our fellowmen. There can be no neutrality between Him and us. We must be obedient or disobedient to Him, and therefore we must find in Him our refuge or our ruin—our helper or our destroyer. That this vast truth may be received into our minds, let us take it somewhat in detail.

I. We have to do with God in Nature. It is His world we live in; and all its substances and forces are things which He hath made, and intends to be used according to His plans. Nay, He acts in them (α), and in them He is willing to be our ally, but not our slave. We cannot use Him to carry into effect our whims and fancies, as the old magicians were said to use the genii supposed to be under their control. God is of one mind, He changeth not; what is called "the uniformity of the laws of nature" is one manifestation of His unchangeableness; and that unchangeableness is most merciful (H. E. I. 3156, 3157, 3173–3177). If we fall in with His laws of nature, all nature is on our side; wind and tide then combine to bear us into our desired haven; but if we will not do so, the very stones of the field will be in league against us (Job v. 23; H. E. I. 3172, 4612) (β). *E.g.*, gravitation. If a builder comply with the demands of this great law, it will give stability to his structure; but if not, from the very moment they are departed from, it will begin to pull down the hut or the palace he has builded. So with all the other substances and forces by which we are surrounded; they are for us or against us: there is no neutrality possible.

II. We have to do with God in Providence. Not only are we in this world, but, whether we like or not, we are under His government. He has laid down laws for our guidance, as communities and as individuals. These laws are vast and comprehensive; they cover every realm of activity and relationship of life; it is impossible for us to find ourselves in any place or circumstances in which some of them are not in force. If we obey them, they will be our helpers; if we disobey them, they will be our destroyers:

obey one, and all others stand ready to befriend us; disobey one, and more manifestly all others become hostile to us. Illustrate—1. *Communities.* The law of frugality. The law of freedom of exchange. The supreme law for every nation is, that God shall be acknowledged as the supreme ruler, *His* will done, His protection sought and trusted in. It was this law that Ahaz and his people were setting at defiance (chap. vii.), and God forewarned them that He would not stand idly by and see it broken (chap. vii. 17–20). If any nation commit itself to a godless policy, it may achieve a transient triumph thereby (ver. 6), but disaster is inevitable (ver. 7). It may be delayed, but it is only that it may come in more awful form. United States of America: their maintenance of slavery when England abolished it, and their civil war. 2. *Individuals.* The comprehensive law (Matt. vii. 12): if a man obey it, the very constitution of society fights for him; if he disobey it, that same constitution fights against him. From God, as the God of Providence, we cannot escape; we must have to do with Him as friend or foe. Those men who deliberately put Him out of their thoughts and plans find it so: just when they seem to themselves to be triumphing in their godless courses, they stumble against Him unawares. They are snared and taken in the great retributive laws of His universe.

III. We have to do with God in Redemption. In Christ, God is revealed, and therefore we are not to be surprised when we see this great Old Testament truth conspicuously illustrated in Him. In the New Testament we are distinctly taught that neutrality in regard to Christ is impossible (Matt. xii. 30; 2 Cor. ii. 16; Matt. xxii. 37–44). Not to accept His salvation, is to reject it; not to submit to His authority, is to rebel against it. We cannot choose whether we will have to do with Christ or not! All that we can decide is the nature of the relationship that shall subsist between us. We can make Him our sanctuary, and then all blessing is ours; or we can refuse to do this, and then He becomes to us a stumbling-block and a snare. Not as the result of any vindictive action on His part, but as the inevitable result of the working of our own nature and of the constitution of the universe. 1. The phrase, "Gospel-hardened," represents a terrible reality (H. E. I. 2439–2442). 2. By our rejection of Christ, and consequent rebellion against His authority, we put ourselves on the side of those powers of evil which He is pledged to destroy, and then His very Almightiness, which would have insured our salvation, becomes our ruin, just as the very same force of wind and wave, which would carry a vessel rightly steered into the desired haven, hurls it when wrongly steered as a miserable wreck on the rocks outside.

Thus, in all the realms of life, we must have God with us or against us; and if God be against us, we have cause to lament that He is God—a being whom we cannot resist, from whom we cannot escape. Therefore, 1. *Let us recognise what the realities of our position are.* Let us not go on to eternal ruin through ignorance or heedlessness. 2. *Let us make God our "sanctuary."* We may do this. He invites us to do it. Having done it, everything in Him that otherwise would terrify us will be to us a cause of joy (Rom. v. 11).

(α) "He this flowery carpet made,
Made this earth on which we tread.
God refreshes in the air,
Covers with the clothes we wear,
Feeds us with the food we eat,
Cheers us by His light and heat,
Makes His sun on us to shine:
All our blessings are divine!"
—*C. Wesley.*

(β) Man, as the minister and interpreter of nature, does and understands as much as his observations on the order of nature, either with regard to things or the mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more. . . . *Nature is only subdued by submission.*—*Bacon.*

The Stone of Stumbling.

viii. 14. *And He shall be for . . . a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.*

This prophecy refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, and it has had a threefold fulfilment. It was fulfilled—**1. In His own personal history.** When He was made manifest to Israel He was so contrary to their conceptions of what the Messiah would be—in the lowliness of His condition, in the spirituality of the kingdom He set up, and, above all, in the ignominiousness of the death He accomplished at Jerusalem,—that they "stumbled at" and rejected Him. **2. In the experience of His disciples in all ages.** In them He has been again despised and rejected. This He foresaw and predicted (John xv. 18–21, &c.). In the world there is an irreconcilable hatred of Christ as He reappears in His people (Gal. v. 28, 29). **3. In the hostility which faithful preaching has always created.** The preaching of the Gospel is the preaching of Christ (Acts v. 42; 1 Cor. i. 23; 2 Cor. iv. 5). The great evangelical doctrines all centre in and flow from "Christ and Him crucified," and can never be clearly and faithfully proclaimed without awakening the disgust and enmity of the carnal heart. They necessarily humble sinful men, and they hate to be humbled. The offence of the cross is not yet ceased; multitudes still stumble at the truth, being disobedient.

1. How sad that Christ should be an offence and a stumbling-stone to a single soul! That His Word, which is sufficient for all the purposes of salvation, should become to any "the savour of death unto death"! 2. How terrible, and earnestly to be shunned, is that unbelief which thus reverses the design of God's greatest mercies! 3. Whatever others may do, let us, with penitent and thankful hearts, make Christ our "sanctuary."—*Manuscript Sermon.*

The Duty of Teachers of Truth in Times of National Perversion.

viii. 16–18.

In Heb. ii. 13 the commencement of verse 18 is quoted as an utterance of the Messiah. This opens up questions concerning the New Testament quotations from the Old which cannot be fully discussed in this commentary. It may suffice to remark that the Spirit inspiring Isaiah was the Spirit of Christ, and that therefore Isaiah's utterances generally may be regarded as the utterances of Christ; and further, this is especially true in those cases in which there is a close similarity in the position occupied by the great prophet of the Messiah and the Messiah Himself. At times Isaiah appears to be merely the spokesman of the Messiah; but in others, while his words had their ultimate and highest fulfilment in Christ, they were primarily true of himself, and this appears to be the case here.

There are times when a nation goes utterly wrong, politically, socially, and, as the root of all the evil, religiously. God is forgotten, and the people give themselves over to purposes of ambition or of sensual pleasure. It is a time of formalism and pharisaism, of infidelity and blasphemy, of luxury and vice. So strong is this current of evil that it seems a hopeless and foolish thing for any man or body of men to resist it. What, then, is the prophet or faithful preacher to do? Prudence counsels compliance with the prevailing temper (2 Chron. xviii. 12), or at least a temporary silence. Shall he listen to prudence, and bid principle wait for a more fitting season? Nay, but—I.

Let him betake himself in prayer to God (ver. 16). Let him pray especially that Divine truth may be kept in the hearts of the few who have been led to receive it (α). II. Let him wait upon God with immovable confidence that His truth shall yet prevail in the earth (ver. 17). Thus did the Primitive Christians, the Puritans, and the Covenanters in the evil days in which they lived. III. Let him recognise and glory in the position he occupies (ver. 18). He and his spiritual children are God's witnesses (Isa. xliv. 8); what position could be more honourable? Let them not shrink from its conspicuousness (Phil. ii. 15); let them not be disheartened by the singularity it involves (H. E. I. 1042–1045, 3906, 3914; P. D. 1188). Amid all that is depressing and threatening in the position to which they have been Divinely called, let them remember their Lord's declarations (Matt. x. 32; Rev. iii. 5).

(α) I agree with Vitringa, Drechsler, and others in regarding verse 16 as the prophet's own prayer to Jehovah. We "*bind*"—*tie together*—what we wish to keep from getting separated and lost; we "*seal*" what is to be kept secret, and only opened by a person duly qualified. And so the prophet here prayed that Jehovah would take his testimony with regard to the future, and his intimation, which was designed to prepare for the future that *testimony* and *thorah* which the great mass, in their hardness, did not understand, and in their self-hardening despised, and lay them up well secured and well preserved, as if by bond and seal, in the hearts of those who received the prophet's words with loving obedience. For it would be all over with Israel unless a community of believers should be preserved, and all over with the community if the word of God, which was the ground of their life, should be allowed to slip out of their hearts. —*Delitzsch.*

Waiting on the Lord in Desertion and Gloom.

viii. 17. *And I will wait upon the Lord, &c.*

I. The characteristic appellation of Jehovah. "The God who hideth Himself" (α). II. The implied mysteriousness of His dealings with His people. It is not merely from Babylon or Egypt, from Tyre or Nineveh, that He hides His face, but from "the house of Jacob." 1. The persons referred to may be regarded as typical of the Church. Though descended from Abraham, they were called "the house of *Jacob*," to denote that they were a *chosen* people—a *praying* people (this at least was true of the best men among them)—a people *in whom God delighted*. 2. With these persons He dealt in a manner contrary to what we should have expected. Looking only at the relation in which He stood to them, we should have expected that the light of His countenance would have gladdened them continually. Yet He hid Himself; and He frequently hides himself not only from the world, but from the Church; not only from the wicked man, but from the believer. Yet here is a difference: in the one case it is total and constant, in the other it is but partial and temporary. In the one case it is in anger, in the other it is in love (Rev. iii. 19). 3. The modes in which He hides Himself. (1) In the cloud of providential darkness—affliction, bereavement, &c. (Isa. l. 10). (2) In the withholding of the conscious enjoyment of religion (Job xv. 11; xxii. 2) (β). III. The resolve of the believer under this visitation. In nothing does the grace of God shine more unmistakably than in the way in which the Christian bears trouble. "Behold, this evil is of the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" said a wicked man of old; but "I will look unto the Lord, and will wait for Him," is the prophet's resolve. 1. As to *looking* for Him. (1.) *For whom* do we look? For our God—our Father—our Friend—our Deliverer. (2.) *Where* shall we look for Him? He is near, though concealed. Then look for Him in Christ, in whom He is reconciling the world unto Himself, in whom He is well pleased even with us. Look for Him in His promises—in His ordinances—in your closet. (3.) *How* shall

we look for Him? With faith—zeal—energy—determination (Job xxxv. 10; Jer. xxix. 13). 2. As to *waiting* for Him. This is a state of mind frequently enjoined and commended in the Bible. Waiting implies faith—desire—patience (P. D. 2643). When you have found Him, fall at His feet and confess your unworthiness. Resolve to follow Him fully. Cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Pray, "Abide with me!"—*George Smith, D.D.*

(α) For details and suggestions under this division, see outline: THE HIDDEN THINGS OF GOD, chap. xlv. 15.

(β) For various suggestions and illustrations, see H. E. I. 200, 1644–1659, and P. D. 815.

PENITENTIAL WAITING ON GOD.

viii. 17. *And I will wait upon the Lord, &c.*

Believers are in the Scriptures abundantly encouraged to wait upon God (Ps. xxxvii. 14; Isa. xxv. 9). In Ps. lxii. 5, it is suggested that this waiting upon God is connected with hopeful expectation of receiving a blessing. The same truth is taught us by our Lord in His parable on prayer (Luke xviii. 1–8). However long God delays, we must wait expectantly. In our text, however, we have the idea of waiting upon God while He is hiding His face from His people. The very possibility that He should assume this attitude towards us is depressing, and not unfrequently in our religious exercises we are haunted by the fear that this *is* the attitude He has assumed towards us. Through fears and doubts that intercept our vision of Him, we look up to see the face of our Father, and behold only a cloud! In such a case our faith needs quickening, that our hopes may be raised and our courage renewed. The following thoughts may conduce to this end. I. *God does not hide His face from us because His blessings have diminished* (Isa. xl. 26–31; Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13). II. *God does not hide His face from us on account of any weariness in His love* (John xiii. 1; Isa. xlix. 15). III. *God does not hide His face from us because of any caprice in His nature* (Jas. i. 16–17). IV. *If God does hide His face from us, it is only on account of our sinfulness.* This is the dark atmosphere in which God becomes lost to us (chap. lix. 1, 2). V. Consequently, *if God's face is hidden from us, it is at once our only hope and our positive duty to wait upon Him* (Jas. iv. 8). [illegible]t us wait for Him and look for Hi[illegible]. Penitently. 2. Believingly. 3. Patiently. Then will the Lord turn us again; He will cause His face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved.—*William Manning.*

NECROMANCY.

viii. 19–22. *Seek unto them, &c.*

As bearing upon the doctrine of necromancy, an exhaustive discussion of these verses would invove the following points: 1. Under the instigation of a prurient curiosity, or under the pressure of affliction, godless men are wont to seek knowledge and help from the spirits of the dead. 2. Hence, in every age of the world and in every nation of universal history, there have been necromancers, wizards, &c., known by various names, practising various arts of divination and legerdemain; playing with the credulity of men and women, and claiming access to supernatural knowledge and power. The spirits of modern times are the latest species of this genus of necromancers. 3. This passage implies irresistibly that God frowns upon and condemns necromancy in whatever form. 4. The expostulations, rebukes, and threatenings of the Lord, through

His prophet in this passage, assumes it to be impossible for man to get knowledge or help for the living from the dead. The power of *God* to send back to earth the spirits of the dead is quite another thing; yet as to this the practical question is—Does He see fit to use it? 5. Hence, to discard the light of God's revealed Word and to seek light and help from the dead, is to hurl oneself against the impermeable and impassable wall with which God has shut in the living of our world, and involves both positive conflict against God and contemptuous rejection of His Divine Word. 6. As Satan has a natural sympathy with everything abhorrent to God and ruinous to man, we ought to look for his hand in these agencies of necromancy, to whatever extent God may give him scope and range for action. What these limits may be, who can tell? It is man's wisdom to keep himself utterly aloof from the sphere of Satan's agencies and temptations. 7. Necromancers and spirits practically league themselves with Satan against God, and should be aware that his lot must be theirs, and their end be as their works, no dawn of day ever breaking forth on the midnight of their gloom.—*Henry Cowles, D.D. Commentary on Isaiah*, pp. 68, 69.

The Law and the Testimony.

viii. 20. *To the law and to the testimony, &c.*

This was one of the watchwords of the Reformation, and since then it has been a favourite text with Protestants. The noble Sixth Article of the Church of England (α) is but an expansion of it. It assumes that there is one standard of truth, one infallible oracle, to which in all their moral perplexities and spiritual difficulties, it is the wisdom, if not the duty, of all men to appeal. And *we* are persuaded that we have this standard, this oracle, in the Bible (H. E. I. 543). If men neglect it,—if they strive to construct a creed or direct their conduct without it, two things are certain: 1. *They lack the knowledge and wisdom essential to success in life.* Their neglect of it shows that they have no light in them (β). 2. *There await them disappointment, disaster, and despair.* This is the teaching of the other beautiful translation which many eminent scholars have adopted: "To the teaching of God, and to the testimony! If they do not according to this word, they are *a people for whom no morning dawns*" (H. E. I. 641).

"But all who consult the Bible do not obtain from it sure guidance: the proof of this is the differences among those who consult it, both as to belief and practice. In support of the most absurd doctrines and the most pernicious practices, the authority of Scripture is claimed." True, but the error lies not in "the law," but in the men who refer to it (γ). If the Bible is to be really helpful to us, we must consult it *honestly* (H. E. I. 573, 574, 4854). *Humbly* (H. E. I. 387–389, 562–567, 587, 599). *With a constant recognition of our help of the Holy Spirit* (H. E. I. 622, 623, 2877–2882). *Prayerfully* (H. E. I. 570, 571, 598, 4856). *Diligently* (H. E. I. 576–580; P.D. 315). *Intelligently* (1) In regard to the subjects concerning which we seek instruction (H. E. I. 540–542, 558–560). (2.) In regard to our interpretation (δ) and application of its utterances (H. E. I. 544-550, 568, 569). The man who thus uses the Bible (ϵ) will be cheered as he advances in life by a dawn that will brighten and broaden into perfect day. He will be led by it to Christ, "The Light of the world," and following Him in loving obedience and unswerving loyalty, he will find the declaration for ever true, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

(α) "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby,

is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

Here also may be quoted the declaration of the Westminster Assembly of divines:—

"VI. The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are so ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

VII. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded or offered in some scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. . . .

X. The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture."—*The Confession of Faith.*

(β) Just as it would be conclusive proof of ignorance of geology if a prospecting party of miners left unexplored the very spot concerning which the character of the rocks and soil cried loudly, *Gold!* Or if some professional man, perplexed by a serious and embarrassing case, should leave unconsulted the standard works containing the solution of the problem.

(γ) Lawyers and doctors, professedly consulting the standard works of their profession, have misled their clients and killed their patients; but the fault has not been in those standard works, but in the men who failed to use them aright. Bradshaw's Railway Guide is not a safe guide in the hands of every traveller.

(δ) The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.—*The Confession of Faith.*

(ε) The Holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God, and that He only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.—*The Larger Catechism.*

Unsanctified Suffering.

viii. 21, and ix. 13. *And they shall pass through it, &c.*

I. Sin leads to suffering. 1. This is true of *individuals* (H. E. I. 4603–4612). But because there is another life and a future retribution, the full results of sin are frequently not seen in this life. Nay, the sinner often appears prosperous even to the end (Ps. lxxiii. 3–5). 2. But in the case of *nations*, which as such have no immortality, it is otherwise (P. D. 2544); it is more prompt; it is often exceedingly terrible. This fact should make those who have any love for their children hostile to any national policy that is unrighteous, however politically "expedient" it may seem. **II. There is in suffering no sanctifying power.** God may use it as a means of arresting the careless, or of making good men better, but there is in it no certain reformative energy. On the contrary, it may harden men in iniquity (α). **III. Suffering does nothing in itself to abate God's anger against sinners.** We, when we are wronged, often yield to a passion of vindictiveness, which is sated when we have succeeded in inflicting a certain amount of pain on the wrong-doer. But God's anger is not vindictive, but righteous (H. E. I. 2288–2294); hence its terribleness. As it does not thirst for suffering, it is not satisfied by suffering. As long as the sinner holds to his sin, God's anger will burn against him, irrespec-

tive altogether of the suffering he may have endured. Nothing will turn away that anger but a genuine repentance (ix. 13).

1. In the hour of temptation, let us think of sin not as it then presents itself to us, but as it will certainly appear to us when its results are manifested (H. E. I. 4673–4676). 2. When suffering has come upon us, let us regard it as God's summons to repentance (H. E. I. 56–59); and let us obey it with thankfulness that God is willing to deal with us in the way of mercy.

(a) See outline: MORAL ORDUHACY, p. 16.

THE REMEDY OF THE WORLD'S MISERY.

(*Missionary Sermon.*)

ix. 2–7. *The people that walked in darkness, &c.*

The prophecies contained in this text are of a mixed kind; they are partly fulfilled and partly unfulfilled. We have the authority of the Evangelists to apply the passage to Gospel times, and to prevent it from being restricted to the Jews (Matt. iv. 14–16; Luke i. 79; ii. 32). Let us consider—

I. **The view taken by the Prophet of the moral state of the world previous to the glorious change which makes the subject of his prophecy.** 1. *The people are represented as walking in darkness.* Darkness is an emblem of ignorance and error; and an emblem the most striking (α). 2. *But darkness alone appears to the mind of the Prophet only a faint emblem of the state of the heathen:* he adds, therefore, "the shadow of death." In Scripture this expression is used for the darkness of that subterranean mansion into which the Jews supposed the souls of men went after death. Figuratively, the expression is used for great distress; a state of danger and terror. It is an amplification, therefore, of the Prophet's thought. The predominant idea is that of a sense of insecurity, accompanied by fear. Darkness increases danger and fear at the same time. Such is the state of the heathen. The religion of the heathen has ever been gloomy and horrible. 3. *The Prophet adds another note of the state of the heathen:* Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy (β). He beholdeth them increasing in number only to multiply their misery (γ). Universal experience proves that misery is multiplied when God and truth are unknown. In this case there is no redeeming principle; the remedy is lost; despair completes the wretchedness of the people, and were it not for the prospects opened by the Gospel, that despair would be final and absolute. Here, however, the text breaks upon us with a glorious and cheering view. The Prophet beholds a light rising in obscurity; a great light dispels the heavy gloom; comfort, joy, and salvation dawn upon the earth (ver. 2).

II. **On this blessed visitation we would now fix your attention.** 1. *As darkness is an emblem of the religious sorrow which had overcast the world, so light is an emblem of the truth of the Gospel.* The Gospel is "light." (1.) This marks its origin from heaven. (2.) This notes its truth. It is fitting that what is truth, without mixture of error, should be compared to what is the most simple substance in nature. (3.) It is called "light" because of its penetrating and subtle nature. (4.) Because of the discoveries which it makes. (5.) Because it is life and health to the world. 2. *As in the vision light succeeds to darkness, so also joy succeeds to fear and misery* (ver. 3). The joy here described is no common feeling; it is the joy of harvest, the joy of victory. The effect of the diffusion of the Gospel in producing joy is a constant theme of prophecy (chap. xxiv. 16; Ps. xcviii. 8; Luke ii. 10). True joy, as yet, there is none

upon a large scale; of sorrow and sighing the world has ever been full; and as long as it remains in this state, even sighs might fail rather than cause to sigh. Even that which is called joy is mockery and unreal, an effort to divert a pained and wounded mind; it gleams like a transient light, only to make men more sensible of the darkness. As long as the world is wicked it must be miserable. All attempts to increase happiness, except by diminishing wickedness and strengthening the moral principle, are vain. The Gospel is the grand cure of human woe. When it has spread to the extent seen by the Prophet, a sorrowing world shall dry up its tears, and complaint give place to praise (Isa. xlv. 8; xxxii. 17). They shall joy as in victory, for the rod of the grand oppressor shall be broken; Satan shall fall, his reign be terminated; and one universal, transporting "Hallelujah" ascend from every land, to the honour of Him by whom the victory is achieved.

III. So vast a change must be produced by causes proportionably powerful; and to the means by which this astonishing revolution is effected, the Prophet next directs our attention (vers. 4, 5). These words speak of resistance and a struggle. He that expects the conversion of the world without the most zealous application and perseverance among God's agents, and opposition from His enemies, has not counted the cost. In the conduct of this battle two things distinguish it from every other contest: The absolute weakness and insufficiency of the assailants (δ), and their miraculous success. A remembrance of these things encourages us in our missionary operations. If our plans had been applauded by the wisdom of this world, there would have been too much of man in them, and we might have doubted the result (Jud. vii. 2). The victory shall be eminently of God. For the battle shall be, not "with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, but with burning and fuel of fire." The demonstration of the Spirit, the power of God, is here compared to fire. The Spirit, in His saving operations, is always in Scripture compared to the most powerful principles in nature—to the rain and dew, to wind, to thunder, to fire. All these images denote His efficiency and the suddenness of the success; and the extent of the benefit shall proclaim the victory to be the Lord's. We have seen the effect of this vital influence at home; and we may, in some degree, conjecture what will be done abroad. Yet perhaps something very remarkable may take place, as is intimated in the text; some peculiar exertion of the Divine power upon the mind of the world.

IV. But it may be said, "Is not all this a splendid vision? You speak of weak instruments effecting a miraculous success; of the display and operation of a supernatural power touching the hearts of men and changing the moral state of the world, but what is the ground of this expectation? This natural and very proper question our text answers (vers. 6, 7). In these verses we have the grounds of that expectation of success which we form as to missionary efforts. The plan of Christianising the world is not ours; it was laid in the mind of God before the world was. The principal arrangements of the scheme are not left to us, but are already fixed by the infinite wisdom of God. The part we fill is very subordinate; and we expect success, not for the wisdom or the fitness of the means themselves, but because they are connected with mightier motives, whose success is rapid, and whose direction is divine; because God has formed a scheme of universal redemption, to be gradually but fully developed; because He has given gifts to the world, the value of which is in every age to be more fully demonstrated; and because He has established offices in the person of Christ, which He is qualified to fill to the full height of the Divine idea (text).

Our text has set before us the moral misery of the human race; the

purpose of God to remove it by the diffusion of His truth and grace; the means chosen for this purpose; and the ground of that certain success which must attend the application of the prescribed means under the Divine blessing. It now only remains for me to invite you to such a co-operation in this great work as your own ability and the importance of the enterprise demand.—*Richard Watson*, "Works," vol. iv. pp. 206–224.

(α) As the pall of darkness is drawn over the world, the fair face of nature fades from the sight; every object becomes indistinct, or is wholly obscured, and all that can cheer the sight or direct the steps of man vanishes. So the gradual accumulation of religious errors, thickening with every age, banished the knowledge of God and His truth from the understandings of men, till all that was sublime in speculation, cheering to the heart, supporting to the hopes, or directive to the actions of men, passed away from the soul, and left the intellectual world like that of nature when deprived of light. The heaven of the soul was hung with blackness, and "their foolish heart was darkened."—*Watson.*

(β) Alexander and several other modern scholars read: "*Thou hast enlarged the nation, Thou hast increased its joy,*" understanding the Prophet to mean that the true Israel had been increased by the calling of the Gentiles, and that this increase had been a cause of great gladness.

(γ) If the Prophet speaks of the Jewish people, he declares a fact remarkably striking. One of the blessings promised to their founder, Abraham, was, that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea-shore. But that which was designed as a blessing, and is described as such in the promise, was made a curse by the wickedness of the Jews. For what end, in the former periods of their history, did they multiply, but to furnish food for captives, slaughter, and oppression? In later times, they have multiplied, and spread themselves over the world; but their joy has not been increased. Degraded in character, and despised by the nations where they sojourn, without a country, a temple, or a sacrifice, they bear, like Cain, the marks of God's curse, are vagabonds in the earth, preserved to warn us of the just severity of God.

There is nothing, however, in the connection to induce us to suppose that the Prophet particularly contemplated the Jewish nation. The same thing must be affirmed of every nation that abandons itself to wickedness. When nations are multiplied, their political strength is increased; and happiness would be multiplied too, were it not for sin. But in wicked nations the "joy is not increased." This negative expression signifies the misery is increased. God has not added His blessing; and there is no joy.—*Watson.*

(δ) The weakness and insignificance of the instruments used in breaking the rod and yoke of the oppressor is sufficiently marked by the allusion to the destruction of the host of Midian by Gideon and his three hundred men. The family of Gideon was poor in Manasseh, and he was the least of his father's house; the number of men assigned him was contemptible; their weapons were no better than an earthen pitcher, a torch, and a trumpet; the men who dreamed of Gideon dreamed of him under the image of a barley-cake. All this meanness was adopted that the deliverance of Israel might appear to be the work of God; and this is the manner in which He has ever wrought in the revival and spread of godliness in the world. Who were the instruments of spreading true religion in the Apostolic age, we know; they were the despised fishermen of Galilee. Feeble and unpromising instruments have also been employed in subsequent revivals; and from the conformity of the present missionary system of this model we augur well of future success.—*Watson.*

The Joy of Harvest.

(*Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon.*)

ix. 3. *They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, &c.*

I. The joy of the natural harvest. Harvest was peculiarly interesting to the Jews. (α.) Two things render "the joy of harvest" peculiar and impressive: 1. It is the completion and reward of the anxiety and labours of the year it closes. 2. It furnishes the supply for our needs in the year to come.——We call upon you to rejoice before the Lord to-day (P. D. 1710–1712), and to associate your thanksgiving with the name of Christ (Heb. xiii. 15). Let all outward gifts remind you of that unseen Mediator through whom they flow. Our gratitude should be deep and fervent; it should bear some proportion to the regret we should have felt if God had withheld the blessings in which we now rejoice, and had

blighted the promise of the year. Yet now, when those temporal gifts abound, let us remember their inability to satisfy the needs of the soul. The satisfaction for these needs is to be found only in Christ. He who had more corn than his barns could hold, now wants a drop of water to cool his tongue. **II. The joy of the spiritual harvest.** The vicissitudes of the religious life are often compared to those of the seasons (Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6). The Christian husbandman has his anxieties, arising from the badness of the soil, the unfavourableness of the seasons, the delay of harvest, the fear of final loss. Yet he has his reaping seasons of joy even in this world—1. When a consciousness of sin which has long oppressed the soul is exchanged for a sense of pardoning mercy, through the application of the blood of sprinkling. 2. When, after a long period of depression, hope revisits the mind (H. E. I. 313, 314, 1658, 1659, 3041). 3. When there come to us the answers to our prayers that were long delayed (H. E. I. 3895, 3896). "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; *but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.*" 4. When the spiritual triumphs of the gospel are made manifest: to parents in their families; to ministers in their congregations; to missionaries abroad. Just in proportion to the toil and the prolonged anxiety is the rapture of success. The harvest sometimes comes to us after long delay, after many anxieties, after many fears (Jas. v. 7, 8). God sees fit to exercise His people with the discipline of suspense, but this is for their good (Lam. iii. 26). **III. The joy of the eternal harvest.** When all Christ's people are gathered into His immediate presence (Matt. xiii. 39); then will the declaration of our text be fulfilled in the highest sense of which it is capable. The ransomed will rejoice when they think, 1. *Of the grace that reigns in their salvation.* By that grace they were transformed from being tares, the end of which is burning, into wheat meet for the garner. 2. *Of the great cost and care bestowed upon their culture*, that they might be ripened for the heavenly kingdom. 3. *How often they despaired of their own safety.* 4. *Of their deliverance from the fearful fate of the tares and chaff*, whose end is to be burned.

—*Samuel Thodey.*

(a) They had scarcely any foreign trade—none till Solomon's time. Every family lived upon its own inheritance and upon the produce of its own land. Consequently if harvest failed, all failed. They expressed their joy by solemn offerings to the Lord. Not a field was reaped before the wave-sheaf was placed upon the altar; and when it had been waved there, amidst the loud thanksgiving of the people, before the Lord of the whole land, the messengers from the Temple carried the proclamation to the husbandmen in the field, "Put ye in the sickle and reap!"—*Thodey.*

The Titles and Government of Christ.

ix. 6. *For unto us a Child is born, &c.*

I. The Incarnation and Government of Jesus Christ. Let us contemplate Him, 1. *As the Incarnate One.* "Unto us a child is born" (H. E. I. 846–853). 2. *As a gift of Heaven to a fallen world.* "Unto us a Son is given." 3. *As advanced to supreme rule and authority.* "The government shall be upon His shoulder. **II. The names and characters by which He is distinguished.** "His name," &c. **III. The adaptation of** these qualities to the purposes of His spiritual reign. 1. We need wisdom, and He is the "Counsellor." 2. We need reconciliation to God, and He is our "Peace." 3. We need support under the calamities of life, and this He gives us, for He is the "Mighty God." 4. We need comfort under the fears of death, and this He gives as "The Father of the Everlasting Age."—*George Smith, D.D.*

The Government of Christ.

IX. 6. *The government shall be on His shoulder, &c.*

Let me caution you against mistaking this government for that essential dominion which belongeth to our blessed Lord as God. To suppose that this had been *given* to our Lord would be to deny His essential Godhead. The government here spoken of is one that He receives: a delegated government as the Mediator of the covenant: that which we are told (1 Cor. xv. 24–28) He will hereafter deliver up to the Father. Three particulars we may point out, in which He exercises this dominion. I. He rules *for* His Church, as "The Lamb in the midst of the throne." II. He rules *in* His Church, being its alone King and Lawgiver. The Church is never for one moment to assume the power of legislation; it belongs not to her, but to Him: *she* has the executive—nothing more—to obey His laws, to carry them out according to the mind of Him who framed them. III. There is a third power—that which He exercises in the souls of His true subjects, ruling in and over them by the power of His own blessed Spirit.—*J. H. Evans, M.A.: Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 337.

In this verse we have a constellation of titles, all of which illustrate the essential dignity and mediatorial claims of Jesus, and tend to awaken the confidence of the Church. The very first declaration, His "name shall be called Wonderful," fitly prepares us for all that is to follow, teaching us to expect something beyond the ordinary works of God. He is "wonderful" in His incarnation, in His government, in the counsels He originates, in the divinity of His nature, in the eternity of His existence, in the results of His mediatorial rule, for He is "the Prince of Peace," swaying the sceptre of mercy over an apostate and disordered world. There is a beautiful consistency in all this; for if the government of earth and heaven, the sovereignty of the Church and of the world, is to be exercised by the Redeemer, it is necessary that He should be possessed of attributes equal to its immense responsibilities. But these attributes are His, and hence the command, "Rejoice, for the Lord reigneth!" **I. It is a cause of peculiar rejoicing to all good men that the government of the world is in the hands of Christ.** Their interest and joy in this fact arise—1. From the near and sacred relation in which Jesus stands to them. 2. From the glorious perfectness of His character, which guarantees the wisdom and blessedness of His sway. 3. From the changelessness, perpetuity, and destined universality of His rule. **II. The sovereignty of Christ affords great relief in contemplating the abject condition of the heathen world.** The heathen have been given to Him for His inheritance, and He will certainly deliver them from the superstitions and miseries by which they are oppressed. **III. This fact gives us a deep interest in beholding the vast extent of the universe of God.** Every part of it is but a province in Christ's boundless empire.—*Samuel Thodey.*

His Name . . . . Wonderful.

IX. 6. *His name shall be called Wonderful, &c.*

I. Christ is wonderful in His nature. He is wonderful, 1. in respect of *His essential Godhead.* 2. In respect of *His perfect manhood. All* excellences were combined in him as a man, unlike even His most eminent servants, who are distinguished for the possession of *special* graces, which too often are clouded by some opposite defect. 3. In respect of *the union in Him of Deity and humanity* (1 Tim. iii. 16).

II. Christ is wonderful in His offices.

at once Prophet, Priest, and King. 1. As a *Prophet*, what wonderful disclosures He has made to us of the Divine nature and will, and of human duty and destiny; with what wonderful authority He spoke; with what wonderful completeness and beauty He fulfilled all His own commandments! 2. As a *Priest*, how wonderfully He was at once sacrifice and offerer: how wonderfully He still carries on the work of reconciliation (Rom. viii. 34). 3. As a *King*, how wonderfully He rules, with omnipotent power, yet with lamblike gentleness.

III. Christ is wonderful in His relation to His people. 1. In the care He exercises over them (Ezek. xxxiv. 11–16). 2. In the abundance of the grace which He ministers to them (2 Cor. xii. 9; John i. 16; H. E. I. 936). 3. In His condescending thoughtfulness for each one of them (John x. 3, 14, 15) (α). 4. In the perfectness of His sympathy with them. He identifies Himself so entirely with His people, that they have not a single care, trial, or temptation of any sort, but it is as much *His* as it is *theirs* (H. E. I. 952-961).—*J. H. Evans, M.A.: Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii. pp. 336–348.

We are continually struck with one marked contrast between the greatness that is human and the greatness that is Divine: human greatness the more it is examined the less wonderful it appears, but Divine productions, the more closely they are investigated the more brightly they shine. We shall see that Christ is wonderful, if we consider—I. *The excellences that compose His mediatorial character.* God and man! Nor is this a wonder to men only (1 Pet. i. 12). II. *The stupendous blessings He bestows on His friends.* III. *The reserves of glory which He waits to exhibit in new unseen and future worlds.*

Behold Him, and 1. Never hesitate to acknowledge Him as your Saviour and Lord. 2. Yield a ready obedience to His authority. 3. Anticipate His coming in glory.—*Samuel Thodey.*

(α) Oh, how "wonderful" must He be, that suits Himself to the cares of all, as if He had but one! cares for each as much as He cares for all, and cares for each as if he *were* all! We are lost in this deep. I sometimes get some light from this thought:—Why, the sun can shine into the attic as well as into the Queen's palace; it occasions no difficulty to the sun. Blessed Jesus! there is no difficulty for Thee to supply all our minutest wants; in Thee there is the abundance of power, and quite as great an abundance of love.—*J. H. Evans, M.A.*

Christ our Counsellor.

ix. 6. *His name shall be called . . . . Counsellor, &c.*

I. How Christ may be our Counsellor. Immediate, close, and confidential intercourse is involved in our idea of taking counsel. When we are in perplexity, we lay the whole matter before a friend in whose wisdom we trust. So we may spread our difficulties before Christ in prayer. Thus far, all is clear. But how can we receive from Christ the answer and guidance we seek? How does an earthly friend help us in such a case? *By producing a certain impression on our mind.* He may do it by spoken words, by letter, or even by a gesture. The *manner* is unimportant. So Christ guides us *by producing impression on our mind; how*, we know not, nor does it matter greatly. The well-instructed Christian seeks counsel from Christ in all things. He prays for *daily* guidance. Special difficulties he makes matter of special prayer. Then, upon the mind previously made calm and willing, there comes a sense of rectitude, and a feeling of resolution. One course, generally that which involves most self-denial and manifests least self-dependence, comes prominently forth in strong relief, as most to be preferred. Its advantages each moment look clearer and brighter; its consistency with his religious profession,

conformity to the will of God, and true wisdom, are more and more strongly impressed upon his mind. He doubts no more. He has arrived at a decision. Christ's counsel has prevailed. It is our privilege thus to be directed at every stage and in every vicissitude of life.

II. **Why we should take Christ for our Counsellor.** Because in Him are all the qualities that would cause us to value and seek the counsel of an earthly friend—tenderness, wisdom, and power. He can help us to carry out His counsels.

III. **What will be the effects of making Christ the Man of our counsel?** 1. *A general consistency of Christian conduct.* Inconsistency arises from listening to contradictory advisers; sometimes going to Christ, and sometimes taking counsel with flesh and blood. 2. *A conformity and likeness to Christ.* You will learn to love what He loves, and to desire what He promises. In the man who constantly makes Christ his counsellor, there is begotten a spirituality of mind, a deadness to the world, a fixedness of purpose, a cheerfulness of temper, a self-possession and patience, which are scarcely conceivable and quite invaluable. A man is powerfully influenced by the company he keeps—whether it be refined and moral, or coarse and profligate.

What, then, must be the effect of habitual intercourse with the Lord of light and grace and glory? 3. *A preparedness for Christ's presence in heaven?* What is the bliss of heaven? It is the vision of the Almighty; unclouded and uninterrupted intercourse with the Saviour and Lord of all. The more we have cultivated this here, the more fitted we shall be for it hereafter.—*Josiah Bateman, M.A.: Sermons*, pp. 1–18.

The Mighty God.

ix. 6. ***His name shall be called . . . The Mighty God.***

Various devices to escape from the force of this declaration have been tried (*a*). But after a discussion prolonged through centuries, it is now conceded by the foremost Hebrew scholars of our time, that, whether we accept or reject it, Isaiah's declaration *is* that the Person concerning whom he wrote should be called "The mighty God;" which is merely the Scriptural way of asserting that He should *be* "The mighty God," for names divinely given represent realities. That the Person concerning whom this declaration was made is our Lord Jesus Christ is the conviction of the whole Christian Church. *He* is the "Child," the "Son," the "Mighty God," concerning whom Isaiah wrote. Let us do more than give our assent to this statement: let us think about it.

I. It is essential to soundness of creed, and to any full realisation of the Christian life, to hold firmly to the doctrine of the perfect humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was a *man* in the same sense that this is true of any man here; whatever was essential to perfectness of manhood existed in Him. Unless we grasp this great truth intelligently and firmly, 1. His *example* can be of no considerable help to us (H. E. I. 898). The example of an angel, though it might excite our admiration, would also smite us with despair. 2. His *sympathy* with men, because of His identity with them in their experience, can never be to us, what it has been to millions, one of the most comforting and strengthening of all thoughts (Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15; H. E. I. 872, 954). II. It is equally necessary that we should hold firmly the doctrine of His Deity. That He is "the mighty God" is the testimony, 1. Of His *works* (Matt. xiv. 32, 33, &c.). 2. Of His *words* (John vi. 48; vii. 37; viii. 12, &c.; H. E. I. 836, 840–842). This doctrine pervades the New Testament (H. E. I. 835, 838.) The sum of its teaching concerning Him is, that in Him God was manifest, that He is the true God (1

Tim. iii. 16; 1 John v. 20). It is not only one of the profoundest of all doctrines, it is the most practical. Let me doubt it, and how can Christ be to me a Saviour? How can He be more to me than any other eminently holy and wise man who died centuries ago, or yesterday? 1. What comfort can I derive from the declaration that He died for me? Could a *man* atone for the sins of the whole world, for my sins? 2. What comfort can I derive from the declaration that He now lives and is in heaven? If so, as a *man*, doubtless, He will sympathise with me, but how can I be assured that He hears the cries for help which in times of distress and danger I raise? or that, if He hears me, He is able to help?

1. This complex Christian life of ours can be sustained only by the complex and unfathomably mysterious doctrine of the Divine-human nature of Christ, just as our physical life can be sustained only by the compound yet simple atmosphere we breathe. To simplify the atmosphere by taking away, if it were possible, either of its main constituents would transform the earth into a sepulchre; and to "simplify" Christian doctrine by taking away the doctrine either of our Lord's humanity or of His Deity is the destruction of spiritual life. 2. Let us, then, accept in all their fulness the declarations of Scripture concerning the Person of our Lord. Those declarations transcend our reason, but they do not contradict it (H. E. I. 851, 4809-4814), and they should be joyfully accepted by our faith. 3. Let us think much of Christ as the Son of man, that by His example we may be incited to strive after a noble manhood, and that by the assurance of His sympathy we may be sustained amid all the struggles and sorrows of life. 4. Let us think much of Him as "the mighty God," that our faith may rejoice in His ability to accomplish for us a complete redemption; that our reason and conscience may be led to bow to the authority which must therefore belong to all His utterances; that our love for Him, while it is tender and ardent, may be also reverent; and that our soul may feel itself free to give expression to the feelings of adoration that rise up within us when we contemplate His perfections, His purposes, and the work which it is declared He has accomplished on our behalf.

(α) The following translations have been given by sceptical scholars, but have all been conclusively rejected by sound scholarship:—
"Mighty Hero."—*Gesenius.*
"Counsellor of the Mighty God."—*Grotius.*
"Counseller of God, Mighty."—*Carpenter.*
"And He who is Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, calls His name the Prince of peace."—*Jarchi* and *Kimchi.*

The Everlasting Father.

ix. 6. *The Everlasting Father.*

We usually associate the name of father with the first "Person" of the adorable Godhead. But there is no manner of doubt that the title here belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ—to the very same Person who, in human nature, was a Child born, and a Son given up for the salvation of men. But there is this difference: the title given to the Son born is not merely "the Father," but "the *everlasting* Father. The title is not "Father," but the entire phrase. Read more exactly in accordance with the original words, the phrase is this: "the father of perpetuity, the father of eternity, the father of the for ever." "Father" means here simply possessor or author. To be the father of eternity" is to *have* eternity, and to *rule in* eternity—to be the Lord of eternity. Christ Jesus, who hath the government upon His shoulders, hath it on His shoulders for ever; He is King of kings and Lord of lords throughout eternity. The eternity here spoken of is not the eternity that is bygone—if we may so speak of

eternity; it is the ongoing and unending duration that lies before us, and Christ Jesus is Lord and Ruler of it all. No doubt He who can hold the future eternity in His hand, and who can rule all its affairs, must have been Himself the Unbeginning and Eternal One; and the Scriptures leave no doubts about that being the attribute of our Lord Jesus Christ (John viii. 58; Col. i. 17; John i. 3). But it is that for ever which lies before us which Christ is here said to be the Father of. He is so as its Possessor—He has it; as its Originator—He makes it what it is; as its Controller—He rules in it.

I. Jesus Christ is the father of the eternity that lies before us, the father of the for ever, because He Himself lives for ever. He has it. Observe, this is true of the Second Person of the Godhead in human nature. The connection of the text will not permit us to forget that. It is the Child born and the Son given who is said to live for ever. That is a great thought; the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ in humanity is to live for ever is a stupendous expectation and belief. Sometimes it has seemed to me as it were more wonderful even than the Incarnation. It seems as if it would have been less strange for the Son of God, for some great purpose, to have clothed Himself with a creature's nature, and then, having accomplished that purpose, to have laid down that nature as a thing too far down from the Infinite to be worn for ever. But now the wonder is, that having made Himself our kinsman, He is to be our Head for ever, and is never to cease to wear the human nature in which He died on Calvary. That this is an important thought appears from two considerations. 1. It is part of the Divine promise of the Father to our Lord, and it is a thing for which our Lord prayed as part of His Father's promise (compare Isa. liii. 10, Ps. lxxii. 15; xxi. 4). 2. It implies that His work was finished to His Father's satisfaction. It is clearly spoken of as a reward for work well done. Hence this title "Father of eternity"—hath in germ within it the great facts of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and session in glory (comp. Rev. i. 18). From this fact two inferences can be drawn, both of a most consolatory and joyful character. 1. To God's people. What a Saviour they have! They need never fear that they will be without His care. They could not find a world in all the universe where He is not with them, and they cannot live on to any age when He shall cease to be their light and King 2. The same thing brings comfort to every sinner (Heb. vii. 25). Do not lose yourselves in a great general thought of Christ living for ever; rather narrow the broad and grand conception, and fasten it down upon the present fleeting moment. Christ lives *now*, and lives *here*—lives *here* and *now* to save the sinner and bless the saint. Apply to Him, and rejoice in Him that liveth now and for ever and ever.

II. He originated this age that is spoken of. As by His death He secured His own immortality on the basis of the faithful covenant, and received life for ever because He had done the Father's will; so by the same completion of His mediatorial work on earth He purchased this immortality for His people. All that is valuable in the prospect of unending existence to any human being he owes to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the father of the eternal age; it could not have been without Him.

III. As Jesus Christ, personally and in humanity, lives through this eternal age, and as He introduced it and gave it its grand characteristics, so the administration of its whole affairs is in His hands. The Author of our Faith is the ruler of its progress, and that not on earth alone, but in heaven (Matt. xxviii. 18). What follows from that? 1. What a terrible and what a hopeless thing it must be to resist Christ! To resist Him effectually, we would require to be able to do one or other of two things;

We should need either to go beyond infinite distance and get away from Him that way, or live longer than for ever, which is equally impossible. The only question is this, "Am I in Christ's hands to be slain by Him, or to be saved by Him?" and that turns on my submission to His will. "Am I to sit on the throne beside Him? or take the other alternative and be made His footstool?" 2. What a good thought it is for the Christian, that he can never go away from Christ's care, that He can never be for a moment without his Friend watching over him, and never in any place in which he does not hear the music of those precious words, "Lo, I am with you alway!"—*J. Edmond, D.D.: Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix. pp. 145–148.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

IX. 6. *The Prince of Peace.*

How peaceful was the scene when the first Sabbath shone upon this world! How reversed was the scene when sin entered to revolutionise it! Think of the widespread and woful war which sin has entailed on this world, and see the need of such a Prince as our text reveals to restore the primitive peace. See, too, the magnitude of the work to which the Redeemer stands appointed when He is presented in the character of a pacificator who is to bring this strife to a happy conclusion for man.

I. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF CHRIST FOR ACTING AS "THE PRINCE OF PEACE." We find these, 1. In His original personal excellence as the only begotten of the Father. 2. In His Father's ordination of Him to the office. 3. In the meritoriousness of the work He accomplished as the substitute for sinners. 4. In the station to which He has been exalted, and the executive power which has been lodged in His hands. First of all, He has been appointed Intercessor, to plead the cause of His people on the foundation of the work He has done for them; and, secondly, He has been anointed a King with all the influence and energy of the Almighty Spirit placed at His disposal to carry into execution all the favourable purposes of the Divine government on behalf of those whose cause He has won by His intercession. 5. In the fervency with which His heart is dedicated to the attainment of His object.

II. THE PRINCIPAL ARTICLES OF THAT PEACE OF WHICH CHRIST IS, OR SHALL YET BE, THE MINISTERING PRINCE TO ALL WHO BELIEVE ON HIM. 1. He hath effected reconciliation between God and man. 2. In Christ we cease to war against ourselves. 3. Our Prince hath reconciled us to the angels. 4. Reconciliation is effected between Jew and Gentile (Eph. ii. 14–16). 5. The general reconciliation of man to man, the destruction of selfishness, and the diffusion of benevolence. Christ came, by His dying for all, to teach that all were as brethren, and ought to regard one another with fraternal affection. How much the world required this lesson! How imperfectly it has been learned! H. E. I., 884).—*William Anderson, L.L.D.: Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x. pp. 392–394.

I. The character of Christ: "the Prince of Peace." How wonderful and glorious is this character when viewed in connection with this title! Infinite wisdom and almighty power employed not for purposes of war, but of peace! (Isa. lv. 8, 9). 1. He procures peace. 2. He proclaims peace. 3. He imparts peace. 4. He maintains peace. 5. He perfects peace. **II. The character of His religion.** It is a religion of peace. True, at its first introduction, it leads to conflicts (Matt. x. 34); but in the end it secures a permanent peace (Jas. iii. 17). It will give peace, but only on its terms. **III. Character of the followers of Christ.** They are the sons of peace. 1. They

seek peace with God through the mediation of Christ. 2. They exemplify a spirit like His own, and thus help to heal the wounds of a bleeding world. 3. They extend through the world the gospel of peace. 4. They anticipate in heaven the reign of unbroken peace.—*Samuel Thodey.*

The Empire of Christ.

ix. 7. *Of the increase of His government, &c.*

If any man asks, "Concerning whom does the Prophet write these things?" the answer is, "Concerning Christ." "Of the increase of *His* government and peace there shall be no end" (α). The world has seen many great empires, that bade fair to be everlasting, crumble away; and in view of the history of the past, it is unreasonable to believe that any modern empire, except so far as it is obedient to Christ, will be more durable. This is a world of change, and it is vain to hope that political revelations are altogether things of the past. Two thousand years hence, should the present era so long continue, the map of the world will be very different from what it is to-day. But the empire of Christ is to continue for ever. Unlike all other empires, it is to be continually progressing in extent and cohesion.

What are our grounds for believing this? I. The distinct promises of Scripture (Ps. ii. 8, xxii. 27, lxxii. 8–11; Dan. vii. 13, 14). For a Christian this is sufficient. But even to those whose reverence for God's Word is most profound and unquestioning, it is interesting to see—II. That the nature of things (β) is all in favour of the fulfilment of this prediction. Under this division of our subject, look at some of the differences between all human empires and the empire of Christ. 1. As to their *origin.* They have usually been created by the genius and energy of some great man. But even such men as David, Alexander, and Cæsar are mortal, and because it is impossible to secure a constant succession of men of genius, the empires they found crumble away. To David and Solomon succeeds a Rehoboam, and Rehoboam means ruin. But Christ wields the enormous "power of an endless life" (γ). 2. As to their *progress.* (1.) Vast empires fall to pieces by reason of their very vastness. Time brings many changes even to great empires, and among them at least a temporary weakening of the central power; the heart is enfeebled, and the whole body is enfeebled and begins to decay. (2.) Great empires afford multiplied opportunities for great corruption, and this ultimately kills a state. (3.) Great empires include many conflicting interests; there is a perpetual struggle to maintain the balance of power; mutinies and rebellions are inevitable, and in the end some of these are successful, and the empire is broken. But none of these things can happen in the empire of Christ; none of these causes will tend to check the increase of *His* government. 3. As to their *aims.* This is a consideration even more important and vital than the others. All empires have really had for their aim the aggrandisement of some ambitious man or nation. The inspiring motive has been supremely selfish. Hence fraud and force have been unhesitatingly employed for their advancement, and, because God really rules on earth as well as in heaven, these things, though they secure a temporary triumph, ultimately lead to inevitable ruin (H. E. I. 4612, P. D. 2544, 2995). By similar means the great empire has to be maintained, and in every part of it there are millions watching for an opportunity to subvert it by the same means; because its aims are selfish, it is hated, not loved, by those over whom it triumphs. But the inspiring aims of Christ's empire are righteousness and peace: it is to extend these blessings

that His limitless resources are employed; the manner in which these resources is employed is in accordance with the ends sought; and hence (1) all the laws of God's universe are on His side, and (2) He is loved most intensely precisely by those over whom His authority is most completely established (δ). III. If any further confirmation of our faith in Christ's ultimate triumph is needed, we have it in the history of the world since His crucifixion. When He was crucified they nailed over His head the inscription, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." It was intended to be an act of mockery; it was the declaration of a great truth. And since then He has become the King of the Gentiles also. The mighty empire that tried to stop the progress of His kingdom was ground to powder in the conflict. And now by all the most powerful kingdoms of the earth He is, nominally at least, acknowledged as the supreme Authority. That which is nominal shall become real (Rev. xi. 15).

Concerning the complete fulfilment of the prediction of our text, we need therefore have no fear. And hence,—

1. We can look without dismay at the mighty forces arrayed against Christ and His truth,—heathenism abroad and infidelity at home (H. E. I. 642). 2. We can look forward to the future of the world with hope. A golden age is yet to dawn (H. E. I. 3421–3423). 3. We can labour for the extension of Christ's kingdom with all the hopeful energy of those who know that the end of all their efforts is not failure, but a glorious success (H. E. I. 979, 1161, 1162, 1166–1168).

(α) *Upon the throne of David.* This was in accordance with the promise made to David (1 Kings viii. 25; 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13; Ps. cxxxii. 11). This promise was understood as referring to the Messiah. The primary idea is, that He should be descended in the line of David, and accordingly the New Testament writers are often at pains to show that the Lord Jesus was of that family (Luke ii. 4). When it is said that He would sit upon the throne of David, it is not to be taken literally. The peculiarity of the reign of David was, that *he reigned over the people of God.* . . . To sit upon the throne of David, therefore, means to reign over the people of God; and in this sense the Messiah sits on his throne.—*Barnes.*

The angel who came to Mary affirmed these very things of the Son then to be born (Luke i. 32, 33).—*Cowles.*

(β) According to my view of the Unity of the Divine nature, God is one, as we meet Him in the Old Testament and the Oldest; in the New and the Newest. There are four Testaments: an Oldest and an Old, a New and a Newest. *The Oldest Testament is the Nature of Things.* The newest is Christ's continued life in the present influences of the Holy Spirit. The oldest and the newest are unwritten; the old and new are written; but the voices of the four are one.—*Joseph Cook.*

(γ) See Bushnell's sermon on "The Power of an Endless Life," in "The New Life," pp. 287–307.

(δ) The remarkably emphatic repetition of the idea of His ruling in righteousness, justice, and real benevolence, suggests how fearfully the world has been *misgoverned*, and how little the great body of human government in even civilised nations have sought and practically secured the welfare of the millions.—*Cowles.*

THE SECURITY FOR THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES.

ix. 7. *The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

It may be affirmed with equal truth, that from what zeal is in man we may know what it is in God; and that from what zeal is in man we cannot tell what it is in God (H. E. I. 2229–2240). We can tell what its nature is, but we cannot tell its power. 1. Zeal is in man an intense passionateness of desire for the accomplishment of some purpose; this leads to an energy and continuity of action that in many cases triumphs over obstacles, and accomplishes what seemed impossible. True zeal in man is intelligent, calm, persistent, and unweariable; and all this we know it must be in God. 2. But what its power is in God we cannot tell. Water in the mass, and fire in the mass, is an utterly different thing from water or fire on a small scale (α). "The zeal of the Lord of hosts" is a tremendous conception which the mind cannot grasp.

This declaration is the consummation

and crown of a great promise concerning the Messiah. It is the guarantee that, great as that promise is, it shall not remain unfulfilled; the heart of God is set upon its accomplishment, and He is "the Lord of hosts." We have here a general and blessed principle, applicable to all God's promises. For two reasons many human purposes remain unfulfilled: those who entertain them are not in earnest about them, or they lack power to carry them into effect. But both these essential requisites meet in God—earnestness and power. He makes no promise lightly; He attaches importance to every pledge He has ever entered into; and He will never lack resources to enable Him to fulfil His promises, according to the largest interpretation that can be put upon them (Eph. iii. 20).

Let us use this declaration for the comforting and strengthening of our hearts. There are many great and precious promises, **I. Concerning the extension of Christ's kingdom**, *e.g.*, in the words preceding our text. It is declared that the influence and authority of Christ shall be unceasingly exerted with constantly augmenting effect, until all the disorder and misery of the world shall be brought to an end. So glowing is the picture given by the prophets of the world's future, that we are tempted to fear that it will never be realised. But "the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform *this*"; and those who by their prayers, efforts, and sacrifices are trying to contribute to the extension of Christ's kingdom, may rejoice in the assurance that they are not labouring in vain, nor spending their strength for nought (H. E. I. 979, 1161, 1162, 1166–1168; P. D. 475, 517, 2465, 2466). **II. Concerning the temporal well-being of Christ's people.** (1.) *Deliverance in time of danger* (Isa. liv. 17). Illustrate by the account of the deliverance of Hezekiah (Isa. xxxvii.), noting especially that the promise then given was enforced by the very same declaration: "the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do *this*" (ver. 32; H. E. I. 4058). (2.) *Supply for all temporal necessities* (Matt. vi. 25–34; H. E. I. 4507). **III. Concerning the spiritual necessities and ultimate perfection of Christ's people.** After each of them Faith sees written, though not with ink, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform *this*" (H. E. I. 1063–1071, 1106, 1112–1119). By and by there is to be a great gathering of Christ's ransomed ones in the heavenly world, and this will then be their grateful acknowledgment (Josh. xxiii. 14). Meanwhile, whensoever in our search of the Scriptures we find a promise specially adapted to our needs, let us lay hold of it, saying with joyful confidence, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform *this!*"

(a) The nature of water in a little pool left on the sea-shore by the receding tide is the same as in the great sea itself; but from the little pool we cannot form any conjecture as to the power of water when moving in mighty waves. So with fire,—its nature is the same in a lighted match and in a great conflagration such as reduced Chicago to ashes; but how different its power in the two cases! Scientific observers have left it on record, that while watching that conflagration it was revealed to them for the first time what power there is latent in fire, when massed in a great body; when at its height, solid granite buildings were consumed and passed away as if they had been made of thin pasteboard.

The Outstretched Hand of God.

ix. 8.–x. 4. *But His hand is stretched out still.*

Much is said in the Bible concerning the hand of God (a). Consider what the hand is to man: it is the chief instrument by which he executes his purposes,—farmer, builder, artist, author, &c.; and by the hand of God is meant His executive force in all its varied forms. God has the means of doing all His will, and He is not an unconcerned spectator of human affairs—these truths inspire God's people with hope, courage, and joy; and they ought to inspire with terror all who are in rebellion against Him. His hand is

outstretched, not for, but against them; His irresistible executive forces are certain to be put forth for their overthrow. Alike for the warning of those whose lives are not governed according to the Divine will, and for the exciting of holy watchfulness in those who are trying to obey that will in all things, let us study this prophecy for the purpose of discovering. I. The reasons why God's hand is outstretched in anger. Reminding you that this is not an exhaustive statement of those reasons, and that no man is necessarily safe merely because his conduct is not here specifically described, I point out that among the things that put men in the most extreme peril of destruction by their Creator are—1. *Oppression* (x. 1, 2. *β*). 2. *Hypocrisy* (ix. 17. *γ*). 3. *Stubbornness under Divine chastisements* (ix. 9, 10. *δ*). II. The effects of the outstretching of God's hand in anger. These are *terrible, increasing, continuous.* III. The mode of escape for those against whom God's hand is stretched out in anger. Not defiance, but submission and repentance (ix. 13). IV. Let us note with reverent and thankful wonder, that against the wicked God's hand is long stretched out; that it does not, as it so easily might, come down upon them instantly with destructive force. What a proof we have here that, while He is inflexibly righteous, He is tenderly pitiful! And what an encouragement we have here to return to Him with penitence of heart! (*ε*.)

(*α*) It is so vast that the mighty ocean lies in the hollow of it (Isa. xl. 12). It is a hand of power and skill, for by it the foundations of the earth were laid; and all the wondrous hosts of heaven fashioned (Isa. xlviii. 13; lxvi. 2). In it our life is (Dan. v. 23). When He opens it, His creatures are filled with good, and all their desires are satisfied (Ps. civ. 28; cxlv. 16). By it the Good Shepherd feeds, guides, and protects His sheep (Ps. xcv. 7). It is a good hand, helping all who are trying to serve God (Ezra viii. 22; Neh. ii. 18). It is a mighty hand, delivering His people (Exod. xiii. 3). It is a hand that controls those who control others (Prov. xxi. 1). Even the shadow of it is sufficient protection (Isa. li. 16). It is a heavy hand when it rests upon His people in chastisement (Job xix. 21), and still more so when it rests upon the wicked in punishment (1 Sam. v. 11). It is outstretched to fight against His enemies (Jer. xxi. 5).

(*β*) See outlines on pages 94–96.

(*γ*) H. E. I. 3026, 3027; P. D. 1923.

(*δ*) H. E. I. 143, 158.

(*ε*) H. E. I. 2286.

The Duty of the Afflicted.

ix. 9–14. *And all the people shall know, &c.*

God here complains of what Israel did when grievous and prolonged afflictions, sent by God, fell upon them (*α*): then they left undone what they ought to have done, and did what they ought not to have done; and this opens up the great subject of *the duty of the afflicted.*

An entirely different interpretation has to be put upon affliction in the case of men whose sincere desire is to govern their lives according to the will of God, and in the case of men who are living wholly unto themselves. It is exclusively of afflictions that befall men of the latter order that we intend now to speak, though many things that will be said apply to *all* the afflicted.

I. In the case of the ungodly, the DESIGN of affliction is in the first instance corrective, and then, in the event of its not accomplishing this end, punitive.

II. Their DUTY is—1. To recognise that their afflictions come from God. This is a fact that wicked men are very slow to recognise; they prefer to attribute their troubles to "bad luck," miscalculations on their part, superior ingenuity or force on the part of their human adversaries, &c. They prefer anything to a recognition of the awful fact that it is God who is dealing with them (H. E. I. 143). 2. Submission to the will of God. This is frequently the result of recognition that the affliction comes from Him; men cease to use such language as is attributed to the Israelites (ver. 10). Were it not

that sin dethrones the reason, this would always be the case; but it is not so,—men can be found so hardened in iniquity that they resolve to fight against God. Stoutheartedness in affliction is an admirable thing; there is a place for it; but it is utterly misplaced when it leads men to struggle against the Almighty. The only and inevitable result is heavier affliction and ultimate ruin (vers. 11–14. *β.* H. E. I. 146, 147). 3. **Repentance toward God.** (1.) Repentance is more than submission (H. E. I. 4206–4209). (2.) God will be satisfied with nothing less than change of heart towards Him. (3.) Here we reach one of the most terrible results of iniquity; by it men are incapacitated for naturally doing that which is indispensable to their salvation. Did not God pity sinful men, they could never attain to that state of heart and mind without which it would be impossible for God to forgive them. But Christ has been "exalted . . . for to *give* repentance and forgiveness of sins." With the outward stroke of affliction there comes to the heart the inward grace of Christ: let transgressors be prompt to submit to the one, and to avail themselves of the other (H. E. I. 145, 4210).

These, then, are the duties of sinful men upon whom affliction has come. Let your compliance with them be—1. **Prompt.** Not to comply with them is to perish. Not to comply with them promptly is an aggravation of all your former iniquity (H. E. I. 4247, 4248). By delay you may exhaust the Divine patience (Prov. xxix. 1). 2. **Thankful.** Adore the benignity of God, in that He is willing to receive you on your mere repentance; a repentance which He Himself enables you to exercise. Remember that where God sees it, He does not merely turn away His chastisements from the penitent transgressor; He receives him into His favour, and blesses him as a son in whom He delights (Luke xv. 22, 23). Men do not act so. When their foes submit, they require from them an indemnity for the wrong that has been done; often an indemnity that is intended to be crushing, *e.g.*, Germany and France. But God in all His dealings with penitent sinners shows Himself to be a God of grace (Micah vii. 18, 19). 3. **Intelligent.** Do not imagine that there is anything meritorious in your repentance (H. E. I. 4225–4228). Remember that God thus deals with you solely for Christ's sake, through whose atonement it has become possible for Him to show mercy to penitent transgressors. Here is an additional argument for the exercise of repentance, that God Himself, at so great a cost, has laid the foundation on which He can deal with you otherwise than in the way of justice. If you persist in your iniquity, and by your stubbornness leave Him no alternative but to destroy you, He will be able with absolute truth to say to each of you, "Thou hast destroyed thyself!" Even in pronouncing judgment upon you, He will clear Himself; as did our Lord when He left Jerusalem to its fate (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38).*γ*

(α) The Ten Tribes had already suffered many an infliction; their political organisation had often been broken up by civil wars and foreign invasions, as the house of unburnt brick dissolves into mud before the rain, and the flower of the people had been cut down as lavishly as men cut down the cheap sycamores; but with that stoutness of heart, that obstinate toughness which in all ages to the present has marked this race, the men of Ephraim and Samaria seem to rise superior to every calamity; like Solomon, they will change the sycamores for cedars, and they will replace the brick with hewn stones. The conversion of Damascus from an ancient enemy into an ally encouraged them in their hopes; but Jehovah will confound their policy by bringing the conquerors of Damascus upon them.—*Strachey.*

(β) A man under God's affliction is like a bird in a net; the more he strives, the more he is entangled.—*Bishop Hall.*

(γ) When the monster-taming Hercules overcame all in the Olympics, Jupiter at last, in an unknown shape, wrestled with him: the victory was uncertain, till at length Jupiter descried himself, and Hercules yielded. No striving with supreme powers: we must submit ourselves unto the mighty hand of God, acknowledge our offences, call to Him for mercy. If He strike, as it is with them that are wounded with the spear of Achilles, He alone must help.—*Burton.*

LEADERSHIP (a).

(An Ordination Sermon.)

IX. 15, 16. *The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail, &c.*

I. The world is so constituted that leaders of the people are at present a necessity. It is no disparagement of oak trees to say that few of them are sixty feet high; and it is no disparagement of our fellow-men to say that few of them are qualified to lead others. In both cases we have to do with an ordinance of God. We are all included in it. We all need, in some respect or other, to be led. This arises from the disparity between human needs and human powers. Our faculties and time are too limited to allow any man to dispense with guidance. Even the accomplished statesman needs to be guided in the matter of health by the physician; the skilled physician needs to be guided in building by an architect, and so on through all the grades of human life. Men need guidance in commerce, politics, literature, art, philosophy, and in religion. There is to be a time when in this last respect guidance will not be needed (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34), but that time is not yet. The people still need guidance in religion, because, 1. While in some of its aspects it is so simple that a child is capable of it, in others it is so profound that they need the most thoughtful instruction concerning it. 2. There are many false forms of religion seeking to win acceptance (Matt. xxiv. 24; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 John iv. 1). 3. The natural tendency of the human heart inclines it to the acceptance of those forms of faith which are most unscriptural. This is the real secret of the power of Romanism. To-day, therefore, the people still need religious leaders, and leaders of the highest order. Even with the Bible in their hands, most men need guidance (Acts ix. 30, 31). Woe to them, if they take as their guides men who have not themselves been taught of the Holy Ghost!

II. Leadership involves for the leaders the highest honour or the deepest shame. Many aspire to lead: few think of the difficulties and responsibilities of leadership. 1. *The man who leads his fellow-men well is entitled to the highest honour.* He cannot do it without noble qualities of mind and heart. Those who are well led are, as a rule, not slow to acknowledge and reward the service that has been rendered them. 2. *But leadership does not necessarily involve any honour at all.* The post of prominence may only bring out into view the leader's incompetency, mental and moral. "The fierce light that beats upon a throne," and upon a pulpit, reveals every speck and flaw in its occupant. It is a perilous thing to exchange the pew for the pulpit. 3. *Through leadership a man may reach the most utter degradation and shame.* He may do this (1.) through his *incompetency.* Admiral Byng might have lived and died a respectable English gentleman, if he had not been made an admiral. Many envied him when he was so gazetted: none envied him when he was shot. Many a "stickit minister" would have made a highly respectable and useful church-member. (2.) Through his *dishonesty.* Many a leader, claiming to be the head of a community, has really been its "tail," carried by it, not carrying it on in paths of truth and honesty. His aim has been, not the welfare of his followers, but his own aggrandisement and popularity; his concern has been, not to speak the truth, but to say what would be pleasant. This was the sin of many who claimed to be prophets in Israel (Isaiah iii. 12, v. 20; Jer. v. 31). It is a common sin to-day, both in the political and religious world. Let those who claim to be ministers of God shun it. Self-seeking, everywhere despicable, is in the pulpit most hateful and criminal (P. D. 2482). Let every preacher regard as warnings those base pro-

phets of Israel; let him endeavour to realise that wonderful picture of a true leader drawn by Christ's enemies (Matt. xxii. 16).

III. Leadership involves for the led salvation or destruction. It is not a trivial matter to be well or ill led. How true this is politically, commercially, legally; it is not less true religiously. That community shows little wisdom that chooses its leaders carelessly. That community is insane which demands that its prophets shall prophesy unto it only smooth things (Isa. xxx. 10). The following of righteous leaders who are themselves led by the Spirit of God will result in temporal and eternal well-being; but trust in "religious" demagogues, whose aim is not to speak the truth, but to flatter those who listen to them, results inevitably in social and spiritual ruin. In self-defence, then, demand of your minister that he speak to you, not what is pleasant, but what is true; and count him not your enemy, but your best friend, when he utters what, just because it is the truth of God, shall smite and wound as if it were a sharp two-edged sword (Heb. iv. 12).

(α) See outline: "BLIND LEADERS," p. 92.

TWO CONSTANT FEELINGS IN THE MIND OF GOD.

ix. 17. *Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows.*

From one point of view, this is a terrible text! it shows us that a people may arrive at such a condition of desperate and incorrigible wickedness, that God may feel constrained, as the upholder of truth and righteousness in the world, to destroy them. But, on the other hand, how worthy of thought and thanksgiving is this revelation of God's *constant* feelings towards two very opposite classes of persons—those who are most joyful, and those who are most sorrowful.

I. God's feelings toward young men. He has "joy" in them, a fact of which young men seldom think. Doubtless He has joy in them, 1, because of what they are; and 2, because of what they may become. He has this joy in them as their Creator. The great Artist has a delight in all His works (Gen. i. 31; Prov. viii. 31). Young men are a realisation, more or less perfect, of a thought, an ideal in the Divine mind. Strength and comeliness of body, courage and vivacity of mind, modesty and generosity of heart, are the ideal characteristics of a young man, and precisely as they are actually found in any young man, God has "joy" in him, just as He has joy in the strength of the horse, the beauty of the swan, or the melody that is poured forth by the lark or the nightingale. We frequently see a young man who is obviously a glorious work of God; and had not sin so terribly cursed and marred our race, all young men would have been such as the British youths whose beauty called forth the old pleasant jest, "Not Angles but angels."

All this is, of course, equally true of young women. For the Bible is in this respect to be interpreted like our English laws, concerning which it is decreed that the word "man" shall mean "woman" also in all cases in which nature herself does not forbid such an interpretation. A young woman is more than a pleasing mass of flesh and blood; she is a realisation of a thought of God, a work of the unseen Artist, to whom all that is beautiful in the universe owes its existence (α). Many a young woman is so beautiful that the human artist counts himself happy indeed if he can make on the canvas any fair transcript of her loveliness; and, what is better still, the beautiful body is but a casket in which a more beautiful body is enshrined.

Young men and women, think of this—God delights in you! What

effects will a realisation of this thought have upon you? 1. *It will check that vanity by which the strength of the young man and the beauty of the young woman are often so pitifully marred* (1 Cor. iv. 7). 2. *It will cause you to reverence yourselves.* Those who think that no one cares for them, are apt not to care for themselves; but consciousness that we are observed leads us to circumspection and self-control. If the observation be friendly and approving, it is a stimulus to endeavour to merit it. Respect kindles self-respect. Remembering how God looks upon you, you will shrink from doing anything that will lessen His "joy" in you; you will not voluntarily permit faults or vices to mar the nobleness and beauty that call it forth, any more than the roses, if they had power of self-defence, would give a lodgment to those insects which blight the beauty that causes beholders to joy in them. 3. *Kindly, loving feelings towards God will spring up in you.* Friendliness and love tend to call forth friendship and love; just as the sunshine and rain that in early summer descend from the natural heavens cause flowers to spring forth from the earth.

Consider what joy God must have had in the young man Jesus of Nazareth, and why He had it, and resolve that the same causes for this Divine joy shall exist in you.

II. God's feelings toward orphans and widows. "Mercy on their fatherless and widows." A more familiar thought, but let us not therefore overlook its preciousness. How frequent and how emphatic are the declarations of God's pity for orphans and widows (Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. x. 18; Ps. x. 14, 18; lxviii. 5; lxxxii. 3; cxlvi. 9; Jer. xlix. 11, &c.) Yea, we are taught that at least one-half of religion consists in being like God in this respect (Jas. i. 27). God's pity is practical; let those to whom it is promised trust in it confidently (β). And let God's people make it their business—put themselves to pain and trouble—to be like Him in this respect: *this* is the way to secure His favour for themselves.

(α) The world is God's journal, wherein He writes His thoughts and traces His tastes. The world overflows with beauty. Beauty should no more be called trivial, since it is the thought of God.—*Beecher.*

(β) There are no such promises to those who are free from sorrow and trial as are full and abundant to the afflicted. A good country physician in New England went to a neighbour's house to tell a wife and mother of the sudden death of her absent husband. She was more than ordinarily frail and dependent. She had a large family. Her husband had acquired no property. The fresh blow was indeed terrible to her. When the first wild burst of sorrow was over, she looked up through her tears to her sympathising friend, and said in agony, "But, Doctor, *what* shall I do?" "My dear woman, I don't know," said the kind-hearted physician. "All I can say is, I only wish I had as many promises of God to take right home to myself as you have just now. The Bible is full of promises to those who are in your case." And the stricken woman lived to realise the truth and preciousness of the richest of those promises.—*Trumbull.*

Divine Anger.

ix. 17. *For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.*

I. Anger in God is a calm and just sense of displeasure against sin (α). II. Has its expression in the judgments executed upon men in this life. III. These under an administration of mercy are designed to be corrective. IV. Cannot in the case of failure satisfy the purposes of the Divine anger. V. Hence in all cases of impenitence God's anger is not turned away, &c.—*J. Lyth, D.D.: Homiletical Treasury.* Part I. p. 15.

(α) The anger which God feels and displays is always anger against *sin*. It is never against sinners as offenders against Himself personally, but as violaters of the eternal laws of righteousness and love. It is not possible for the most daring transgressor to injure God in the slightest degree, and therefore He can never feel anything approaching to that personal vindictiveness which we feel against

those who have wronged us. There are some passages which at first sight convey a different impression, as when it is said, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God . . . repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them; He will not be slack to him that hateth Him; He will repay him to his face" (Deut. vii. 10); and again, "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance upon His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies" (Nahum i. 2). But terrible as such passages are, they admit of a ready explanation. In them God manifestly speaks as "the Judge of all the earth," as the Representative and Administrator of righteousness. Some years ago, proclamations denouncing the severest penalties against Fenianism were issued in the name of our beloved Queen; but no one imagined that she cherished any personal hostility against those offenders against her authority. Every month it is her melancholy duty to sign documents that consign convicted murderers to the scaffold, but no one regards these death-warrants as any proof that she delights in the sufferings of those whose sentence she confirms. Nor will any thoughtful person interpret such passages as setting forth anything else than God's resolve to be faithful to His duties as the supreme administrator of justice, notwithstanding that in being so He must perform many things that are revolting to His infinite tenderness and compassion. His expostulations with sinners to repent and turn from their transgressions are a sufficient confirmation of this interpretation (Ezek. xviii. 31, 32, &c.) His anger against sin and sinners is no passion of personal vindictiveness, but is the natural revulsion of purity from impurity, of honesty from fraud, of truthfulness for falsehood; the instinctive abhorrence of generosity for meanness, of benevolence for malice, of kindness for cruelty.

If God did not feel and manifest this anger against sin, it would be impossible to respect and love Him. If He could look down on the mean and dastardly things that are done every day, and yet remain cold and emotionless as an iceberg, as indifferent to the sufferings of His creatures as some Oriental despots have been to the miseries of their wretched subjects, our whole soul would rise up in righteous condemnation of Him.—*R. A. B.*

See outlines: God Oppressed, pp. 28–32; A Terrible Resolve, pp. 61, 62; The Purpose of Punishment, pp. 63, 64.

The Destructiveness of Sin.

ix. 18–19. *For wickedness burneth as the fire, &c.*

One of the grandest and most fearful scenes in nature is a forest on fire. This is the figure Isaiah employs to describe the destruction that was coming upon sinful and stubborn Israel (α). That destruction would be all-comprehending and irresistible. Even the poorest would not be spared, and the wealthiest could not escape. And all this woe, at which it behoved the people to tremble, is attributed to the wickedness in which they delighted. "Wickedness burneth as the fire"—a comprehensive statement eternally true.

I. Consider how true it is in regard to individuals. The forest-fire—*what a trivial thing it may seem in its commencement!* It was but a little heap of dried leaves and sticks which a thoughtless traveller kindled, that by means of the little fire thus produced he might cook his evening meal. He had no conception how that fire would spread. So the wickedness that ultimately consumes and utterly destroys, often commences in what seems a little transgression, *e.g.*, the few glasses of wine taken at a wedding-breakfast by one who has been a total abstainer; the little act of dishonesty that is undetected, &c. (James iii. 5). Many of the passions by which millions are consumed — avarice, lust, intemperance, &c.—seem little things in their commencement (H. E. I. 4497, 4498, 4513–4518). 2. *It makes progress according to its own laws*, utterly regardless of the desires of the onlookers. It will not stop at any line which they may prescribe. No man can accomplish a desire to burn down just one acre of a forest. If he kindles a fire in the forest at all, it will advance as far and as long as there is fuel for it. So no man can determine beforehand the measure of the power which permitted wickedness shall acquire over him; the fire which a man kindles in the forest of his own passions will go burning on long after he may wish it to stop. 3. *Its power grows continually.* It acquires a marvellous intensity and fervour as it proceeds (H. E. I. 409, 4500, 4501, 4534–4537). 4. Conse-

quently *it proceeds with ever-accelerating rapidity.* Here again the moral analogy is frightfully accurate. 5. Consequently, too, *its range continually widens.* That which began as a little point becomes a vast circle constantly expanding. Things that seemed so far off as to be absolutely safe are speedily included in the ring of flame. So the fire of ungodliness which was kindled in one passion hastens through the whole nature, and destroys every vestige of virtue and nobility; it seizes every faculty of mind and heart (β). 6. *It is remorselessly undistinguishing in its effects.* The fair flowers and the poisonous weeds, the stately cedars and the misshapen brambles, it consumes alike. So again with the sinner: the wickedness that consumes him spares nothing. In workhouses, lunatic asylums, prisons, how many most terrible proofs there are of the truth of this declaration! Once the owners of many choice possessions, and with prospects as fair as those of any of us, they are now like the forest region *after* the fire—blackened and desolate.

II. **Consider how true this is of nations.** Wickedness consumes the nation's prosperity, happiness, strength, and ultimately its existence (γ).

From all this there are many lessons to be learned. 1. *He is a fool who makes a sport of sin* (Prov. x. 23). He is infinitely more foolish than the child who plays with fire. 2. *He is a fool who does not stamp out the fires of unholy passion the instant that he perceives them beginning to kindle upon him.* In dealing with sin, or in dealing with fire, our only safety lies in the promptest and most energetic action (δ; H. E. I. 4733, 4734). 3. *Those nations are guilty of suicidal folly who legalise vice in any form.* 4. *Those who pander to a nation's vices are traitors of the worst kind* (ε).—*R. A. B.*

In this message the prophet affirms that there are resemblances between a fire and sin. It is not a common fire to which he refers, such as is employed for domestic or public purposes. It is a great conflagration which burns the humble shrubbery, the gigantic forest, extends over the land, and sends a mighty column of smoke and flame up to heaven. By attending to this comparison some of the characteristics of sin will vividly appear.

I. **The origin of a great fire.** Recently we read an account of a great fire, and the paragraph closed with these words: "The origin of the fire is unknown." Suppositions were made, conjectures were offered, still a deep mystery which may never be unravelled. The same with the origin of sin. We know it had a beginning, for God only is from everlasting. We know it had a beginning before Eve and Adam felt its power, since they were tempted. We know it began with him who is called Satan and the father of lies. Still, there are three questions about it which we cannot answer. (1) *Where* did it begin? (2) *When* did it begin? (3) *How* did it begin. These questions might have been answered; they have not, because such information is not required by us in this stage of our unending history.

II. **The progress of a great fire.** Place one spark amid combustible material in London. Let it alone. What will be the result? It will leap from point to point, house to house, street to street, until the whole city is in flames. Sin has spread in an exactly similar way. One sin, to the individual; one wrong action, to the family; one immoral look, to thousands; one crime, to a kingdom. The sin of one woman away in the East, some sixty centuries ago, has spread itself amongst the whole race; and there is not one who has not felt, to some extent, its scorching power.

III. **The transforming power of a great fire.** Wood, coal, &c., it transforms into its own essence, because it makes fire of these. It is even so with sin. It turns everything, over which it gains the slightest control, into its own nature—that is, into a curse. The desire to *possess*, sin has turned it in a different direction, and made it an autocratic passion. Take the principle of *ambition* in the same way. Take *commerce* in the same way. Thus the

richest blessings, yea, all the blessings which God has given to us, sin can so transform that they shall become curses.

IV. The destructive energy of a great fire. Who can calculate the amount of property in London alone which has been destroyed by fire? But the destruction which sin has caused in London is infinitely greater and more momentous. Some have bodies, once beautiful, now bloated and withered by sin. Some have feelings, once tender, now petrified by sin. Some whose intellectual powers were once strong, now feeble by sin. Some, who were once full of hope, now hopeless by sin. The destruction which sin has caused is awful. And this it must ever do to all who touch it. Avoid it, therefore, more than anything else. Herein only is safety.

V. The termination of a great fire. It terminates when all the material is consumed and reduced to ashes. Can the fire of sin ever be put out in this way? The body in the grave is scorched by it no more; but what of the soul? Look at the rich man. He is tormented, in pain, not by a literal flame, but by the fire of sin. He will be so for ever, because the soul is immortal.

A great fire has been terminated by a superior quenching power. There is also an element which can completely remove sin from the soul. What is it? Nothing can be more important than the true answer to this question. Health must depart, trade must be left, money not required. Our souls must live for ever. With sin, no heaven, but hell. How delivered? Ask those in heaven, and those on earth, who have been saved. They all say that the fires of unholy passion have been quenched in them, and their guilt removed, by the blood of the Lamb. Apply at once to the same source.—*A. M'Auslane, D.D.*

(α.) Civil war and foreign invasion shall rage through this reprobate people like the fire with which the husbandman clears the ground of briers and thorns. The wickedness of the land becomes its own punishment, and burns with a fury which is indeed the wrath of God, while its fuel is the people themselves.—*Strachey.*

Wickedness, *i.e.*, the constant thirst of evil, is a fire which a man kindles in himself. And when the grace of God which damps and restrains this fire is all over, it is sure to burst forth. . . . The fire, into which this wickedness bursts forth, seizes individuals first of all; and then, like a forest fire, it seizes upon the nation at large in all its ranks and members, who roll up in the form of ascending smoke. . . . In its historical manifestation, this judgment consisted in the most inhuman self-destruction during an anarchial civil war.—*Delitzsch.*

The picture of guilt grows darker still. It is like destroying fire in the jungle of a forest. The confusion and misery thus caused are like the volumes of smoke that mount up in whirling eddies from such a conflagration.—*Birks.*

(β.) Oftentimes a ruling sin will have power little by little to colour the whole life with its own tints; to assimilate everything there to itself, as in ever-widening circles to absorb all into its own vortex, being as it were a gulf, a maelstrom, into which all that was better and nobler in the man is irresistibly attracted and drawn, and is there swallowed up, and for ever disappears.—*Trench.*

See also the Outline: THE TOW AND THE SPARK, pp. 69–71.

(γ.) See Outline: INIQUITY A BURDEN, p. 13.

(δ.) When the heart begins once to be kindled, it is easy to smother the smoke of passion, which else will tume up into the head and gather into so thick a cloud that we shall lose the very sight of ourselves, and what is best to be done.—*Sibbes.*

When a fire is first broken out in a chimney, it may with much less labour be quenched than when it has seized the timber of the house. What small beginnings had those fires which have conquered stately palaces, and turned famous cities into ruinous heaps!—*Swinnock.*

(ε.) See Outline: INIQUITY A BURDEN, p. 13.

LEGALISED INJUSTICE.

X. 1–4. *Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, &c.*

I. An indictment against wicked magistrates. II. A challenge. III. A sentence.

I. Magistrates and rulers are answerable to God. II. Their decisions will be revised. III. Will in many

instances be reversed. IV. The consequences of their injustice will return back upon themselves (α).—*J. Lyth, D.D.: Homiletic Treasury*, Part I. p. 16

(α). See Outlines: OPPRESSION OF THE POOR, pp. 94, 95; and THE PLEADER AND THE JUDGE, pp. 95–97.

THE DAY OF VISITATION.

x. 3. *And what will ye do in the day of visitation, &c.*

These questions were addressed to men who were living lives of ungodliness, and who were rich and strong in the results of their iniquity. To such men I put the same questions. Do not resent them; answer them, at least to yourselves. All the warnings of the Bible are warnings of true and intelligent friendship, all its threatenings "are but the hoarse voice of God's love, crying, Do thyself no harm!" (H. E. I., 604, 605). Let self-love, which has been your governing motive all through life, move you to consider, before it is too late, what you will do in "the day of visitation." It will not always be with you as it is to-day. ? There will probably come to you a "day of visitation" in the shape of AFFLICTION. You have known little of it, but, if life be prolonged, it will certainly come to you (Job v. 7; H. E. I., 47). In how many forms it may come upon you! Broken health —blasted reputation — poverty — bereavement: these things may come upon you singly, or in various combinations, or all together. Men quite as strong as you have been overtaken and overthrown by them (H. E. I., 3991, 4403–4406, 4975–4989). What will you do in the day of visitation and desolation? To whom will you flee for help? To man? You will then find what worldly friendship is worth (H. E. I., 2106–2112, 2131–2137). To God? But will He then hear you? He does not necessarily listen to men merely because they are in trouble (Judg. x. 14; Jer. vii. 16; Prov. i. 26–31). It is the penitent's suppliant only that God will hear and answer, and your very pain and terror may incapacitate you for the exercise of genuine repentance; *that* consists, not in dread of the consequences of sin, but in disgust of sin itself. As your friend I counsel you (Job. xxii. 21–28). It is a mean and miserable thing to have recourse to God only when in trouble (H. E. I., 3877–3879).

II. But if your lot be different from that of all other men, and no day of sorrow ever dawns upon you, there will come to you a "day of visitation" in the shape of DEATH. *That* is certain! What will you do then? To whom and to what will you flee for help? Friends, wealth—what will be their power or value then? And "to whom will you leave your glory?" For you will have to leave it (Ps. xlix. 16, 17; Eccles. v. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 7). And when you have left it, what will become of *you!* Prepare for that which is at once so inevitable and so momentous (H. E. I., 1562–1566).

III. But that is not all. Beyond, there is a supreme "day of visitation," the DAY OF JUDGMENT (H. E. I. 3054, 3055, 3061; P. D. 2100, 2103, 2106, 2107). *You* will be in that countless multitude which will stand before the "great white throne." And you will not be overlooked or forgotten then; *you* will be judged according to the records in "the books" that will then be opened (Rom. xiv. 12). Help—who can then render it to you? Your "glory"—it will have disappeared, or it may reappear as your shame. None of the things which secure for your consideration now will have a shadow of importance then. Do I speak to you as a foe or as a friend when I urge you to prepare for this inevitable meeting with God? (H. E. I., 3062–3066). The time to prepare is *now*. The way to prepare, you know; put into practice that which you have been taught. Then all these days of visitation will be transformed and stripped of their terrors. In the day of sorrow you will have a Friend who will know how

to comfort you; in the day of death that Friend will be with you, upholding you in all that may be involved in that profound mystery; in the day of judgment that Friend will be the occupant of the throne, and He will speak to you, not words that will blast you for ever, but words that will fill you with eternal joy.

The Assyrian Invasion of Judah.

x. 5–34. *O Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, &c*

This prophecy may be used to illustrate the following truths of abiding interest. I. The power of empires and the policy of statesmen are all under the control of God. Free-will is one great fact of the universe; an all-controlling providence is another; and God knows how to harmonise both. In investing man with free-will, God did not abdicate the throne of the universe; He still rules, and whether they do it voluntarily or involuntarily, all men further His purposes. 1. This is a truth to be ever remembered by those who rule. Their desire should be to work along with God, and not merely in subordination to Him. This is the one secret of true prosperity and abiding power. 2. It is full of consolation for good men when rulers are yielding to a mad and wicked ambition (Ps. lxxvi. 10). II. God exercises His control of empires and statesmen for the promotion of the welfare of His people. Every great empire has some underlying policy that guides and controls all its actions; *e.g.*, the underlying policy of Russia is said to be the ultimate acquisition of Constantinople. God's "great policy" is the promotion of the welfare of His people. In raising up or casting down kingdoms He has this object always in view. This again is a profoundly practical truth. 1. The ruler who remembers it will at least abstain from every form of assault on the Church of God. He who undertakes to persecute the Church, undertakes to make war upon Him from whom he received his power, and who can instantly resume it (Acts ix. 4 and Matt. xxviii. 18). 2. Remembering it, God's people will not be dismayed in times of calamity. They will look with assured confidence, not for the destruction of the Church, but of her persecutors; and they will not look in vain. When the "whole work" that God has in view shall be accomplished, the ungodly instrument by which it was effected shall be utterly broken (vers. 12–20). [All this belongs to a realm of truth, the importance and preciousness of which is not likely to be appreciated in these times of freedom from persecution, but by the martyrs in all ages it has been well understood]. III. In the view of God the welfare of His people is promoted precisely in proportion as their holiness is promoted. We see from verses 20, 21, that while God intended by the Assyrian invasion to punish iniquity (ver. 6), His ultimate design was to bring His people back to Himself in penitence and faith. Here we have, 1. A correction of our views. We are apt to suppose that by the welfare of the Church is meant peace and outward prosperity. We are satisfied if her revenues and social influence are increasing. God often thinks it better to take these things away. The day of true welfare for Judah begins when the fierce armies of Assyria come up against her (H. E. I., 3666). 2. Light is cast upon God's estimate of holiness. So precious is it in His sight, that He overrules even the policies of great empires for the promotion of it among His people. It is distinctly revealed that this is His aim in all the discipline of our personal life (Heb. xii. 10; H. E. I., 85–90, 2842, 2843). This should be to us, then, 3. An instruction. We should estimate holiness as God does. We should constantly "follow" it (Heb. xii. 14; H. E. I., 2845–2848). And besides humbly submitting to His chastisements (Lam. iii. 22), we should

thankfully acquiesce in whatever calamities He is pleased to send upon His Church or on ourselves, even though they be relatively as terrible as an invasion by the Assyrians, remembering that His purpose therein is to bring us back to Himself, to make us like Himself, and so render us capable of a happiness that shall be perfect and eternal.

The Assyrian.

x. 5–34. *O Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, &c.*

The Assyrian. I. *His commission*—subordinate, a mere rod in God's hands—defined. II. *His pride*—he boasts of his schemes—his achievements—his strength and wisdom—of what he will do against God. III. *His rebuke*—just—keen—humiliating. IV. *His punishment*—irresistible—sudden—signal—effected by Divine power.

I. The mightiest nations are but instruments of the Divine will. II. Are employed to execute wrath upon the guilty. III. God appoints their special work. IV. Defines its limits. V. Controls their ambitious purposes. VI. Rewards them accordingly.—*J. Lyth, D.D.: Homiletical Treasury*, p. 16.

We know what the Assyrians were in the history of the world. They do not stand alone; they belong to a class of men who have appeared again and again, and are numerously represented in the world to-day—men of enormous force, of abounding energy, of vast ambition, of unscrupulous determination. Such men as Ghengis-Khan, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Cæsar, and Napoleon, are their conspicuous representatives, but their representatives only. They are to be found elsewhere than on thrones and at the head of armies. They have been represented in the Church by ambitious and unscrupulous popes, cardinals, and bishops not a few. They are represented among our nobles by domineering landlords; in commerce by great capitalists, who brook no competition, but will crush a rival at any cost. This chapter concerns men who live in England to-day, and it has for us more than an historic interest.

I. **The ambition of powerful men.** Having power, they naturally and lawfully wish to use it. The astonishing and lamentable thing is the manner in which they delight to use it. God intends all the power that He gives to be used for the same purposes as He uses His own—for the upholding of weakness, the relief of the needy, the dispensing of blessing. But almost always those to whom God intrusts much power use it for self-aggrandisement. Their delight is to crush others (vers. 13, 14; H. E. I. 243; P. D. 244). Instead of doing their best to resemble God, they do their utmost to resemble the devil. What a pitiable mistake! How much the ambitious man thus loses! What a horrible perversion of means of blessing!

II. **The godlessness of powerful men.** 1. Mistaking the use to which their strength should be put, they also forget its source. They are so besotted as to think that it is *theirs*, something which they have originated; as if the jets of a fountain should boast of the water that leaps up through them, forgetful of the reservoir whence it comes (1 Cor. iv. 7). We see how foolish this is; let us not forget how common it is; let us be on our guard against an error so common and so absurd (Deut. viii. 10–18; Dan. iv. 29–31. P. D. 2861). 2. Their godlessness appears, too, in their imagination that there is no limit to their power (vers. 8–11; chap. xxxvii. 24). In their projects there is no dependence on Divine guidance and support, no submission to the Divine will (Jas. iv. 13–15).

III. **The real position of powerful men.** They imagine that they are autocrats: they really are merely instruments in the hand of God. God will be served by us, voluntarily or involuntarily. He knows how, without impairing the freedom of the will, to

use powerful men for the accomplishment of His purposes; in much the same way as the miller deals with the stream that rushes past his mill—he does not try to destroy it, or to stop it, he merely turns it in among his wheels, and then unconsciously it uses its mighty force in doing his work (vers. 5, 6; P. D., 2899). So it was with Pharaoh: though resolved not to serve Jehovah (Exod. v. 2), he did serve Him most effectually (Exod. ix. 16). So, though we may not be able in all cases to trace it, we may be sure it is with all wicked men (Ps. lxxvi. 10). God absolutely controls the vast universe over which He rules: if we will not serve Him as sons, we must do it as slaves or as tools.

IV. The end of men who forget the source of their power, and use it in a godless spirit. They are but rods in God's hand, and when He has accomplished by them what He intended to do, He breaks them, and casts them aside. In their folly they imagine that they can never be broken (Ps. x. 6); yet how easy is it for Him utterly to destroy them! Far-stretching and mighty they seem as a forest, yet how easily is a forest destroyed by fire (vers. 16–19). God's judgments are as axes, by which even the monarchs of the forest are brought low (vers. 33, 34). By Isaiah we are reminded of three historic instances in which all this has been verified: the Egyptians (vers. 24, 26); the Midianites (ver. 26); the Assyrians (vers. 17, 18, 32–34; xxxvii. 36). If we needed any proof that God and His government of the world are still the same, surely we have it in the history of Napoleon I. Let the mighty nations of the earth lay these lessons to heart (P. D., 2787). Let all who are disposed to vaunt their wealth or power be mindful of them: the ruler or the merchant-prince of to-day may be a beggar to-morrow (1 Sam. ii. 3, 4, 7–10; H. E. I., 4404, 4976; P. D., 149, 1617).

Man Proposes, God Disposes.

x. 7–15. *Howbeit He meaneth not so, &c.*

"Man appoints, but God disappoints," "Man proposes, but God disposes," are proverbs which sum up a good deal of human experience. We are often reminded of their truth even when we are striving to be on the side of God, and to be co-workers with Him. There will be great differences between what *we* "mean" and "think," and what *He* has determined in reference to the same actions (α). But more frequently we see this in the case of men who, like the Assyrians, are constructing their plans in direct opposition to God, fully bent on carrying out ambitious and rapacious schemes. All the while they are only agents in effecting Divine purposes; they do what they never "meant" to do.

I. Man's purposes are often godless. In the sense, 1. Of being formed *independently of God* (vers. 11, 13, 14). Men forget that God is inseparably connected with us and all our movements (Ps. cxxxix. 1–12; they never ask whether God will approve of their plans, nor what will happen should He frown upon them; they assume that they have only to plan and execute, forgetting the lessons of experience. Their conduct is as foolish as it is irreligious; irrational because it is atheistic (Jas. iv. 13–15). 2. Of being formed *in defiance of God*. Men harden themselves against the appeals and warnings of conscience and Scripture, and deliberately engage in enterprises upon which they know they cannot ask God's blessing, upon which they know must rest God's curse. Amid all their dark designs there is the torturing thought, which they would fain banish, but which clings to them still, that there *is* a Sovereign Lord whose counsel shall stand. II. God knows how to use man's godless purposes for the furtherance of His glorious designs. This is done, 1. *Sometimes by making an evil purpose the very means of continuing and spreading His good*

work. How often is this seen in the history of persecutions! (See Acts xviii. 1, 2. The Pilgrim Fathers. Tyndale's Bible. Martyrdoms, &c.). The means which men take for putting out the light are used by God for spreading it. 2. *Sometimes by allowing the evil purpose to work on up to the point when its success appears certain, and then bringing about a totally different result.* The device of Joseph's brethren only needed time to effect God's purpose. Haman; enemies of Daniel. There is no stage of a wicked design safe from the chance of utter confusion, and even its last act that was intended to be a triumph may turn out a tragedy. 3. *Sometimes the evil purpose is allowed to do all that was intended, and yet God effects through it His highest designs, even when human wisdom would declare that the case was hopeless.* The crowning example of this is to be found in the suffering and death of our Lord Himself. Every step of that malignant crime, which was thought to be a step towards the utter destruction of the Saviour's mission, was but helping on the triumph intended in the counsels of Eternal Love (John xii. 32).

Learn, 1. *The folly of leaving God out of our plans.* To plan without Him is presumptuous arrogance (vers. 15). It is to invite defeat, our knowledge being so limited and so certain to leave out some disturbing influence that will frustrate all our anticipations. A godless plan always means defeat in proportion to its apparent successes. The choice that really lies before us is to work *with* God as His children, or *for* Him as His slaves, His tools, His instruments. Our choice will be left perfectly free; but if we choose to reject His paternal guidance, we shall find that all that we have secured for ourselves is merely the contemptible honour of figuring in our small way as reprobates (Exod. ix. 16). 2. *The dignity of human life generally,* as being comprehended in the supreme plans of God (Gen. xlv. 8) (β). 3. *How to regard the disappointments of life.* When things turn out differently than we "meant" or "thought," it is useless to fret and fume against them. Instructed by God's Word, let us humbly and reverently acquiesce in our disappointments as forming part of a plan of God, conceived in paternal love, which is unfolding moment by moment: each event, whether bright or dark, having its mission from Him, and clothed with the grandeur of an unerring counsel. If our purpose has been a righteous or beneficent one, though it may seem for a time to have been utterly set aside, yet in the *end* we shall find that God has used it to further results more important and glorious than it entered into our mind to ask or think (γ).—*William Manning.*

(α) P., D., 2899, 2906.

See the whole article PROVIDENCE in the H. E. I., and the other references given under this heading in the "Index of Arrangement."

(β) See Outline: EVERY MAN'S LIFE A PLAN OF GOD, chap. xlv. 5.

(γ). P. D., 863, 865, 867, 868, 2101, 3239.

"God's help is always sure,
His methods seldom guessed;
Delay will make our pleasure pure,
Surprise will give it zest;
His wisdom is sublime,
His heart profoundly kind;
God never is before His time,
And never is behind."

—*Lynch.*

A HAPPY CONVERSION.

x. 20. *And it shall come to pass, &c.*

Consider, 1. What is said of their former error. When it is said that they "shall no more stay upon him that smote them," it surely implies that they had done this before: this was their error. They had stayed upon another—upon Assyria as a refuge and defence against the confederacy that threatened Ahaz (chap. vii. 1–12, viii. 4–9), just as at other times they relied upon Egypt as a defence against Assyria,—and they were to be delivered from this tendency

to trust in human help, and were to be taught to "stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth." Three things are here implied and expressed. 1. *They had exercised an improper dependence.* To this we are all naturally prone. We need help, and are apt to seek it in some creature rather than in the Creator. The evil of this course is, that thus we are kept away from God (H.E. I., 169–177). 2. *Their dependence had been disappointed.* That on which they stayed, not only failed them, it injured them (2 Chron. xxviii. 20; Jer. xvii. 5, 6). Creature confidence brings a curse upon us in two ways. (1) By disappointments (Prov. xxiii. 5; Ps. lxii. 9. cxlvi. 3, 4; Isa. ii. 22). (2) By Divine rebukes (Jer. ii. 17–19; Jonah iv. 6, 7). 3. *Their folly was to be corrected by their sovereign.* They were to be taught wisdom by the things they suffered. But, alas! men often harden themselves against even such instruction (Isa. ix. 13; Jer. v. 3; Amos iv. 6–11). Here we see the depravity of human nature in rendering inefficacious all these Divine chastisements. When this is the case, there is a danger of one of two things: either that God in anger will throw down the rod (Hos. iv. 17), or that He will fulfil His own threatenings (Lev. xxvi. 21, 23, 24, 27, 28; H.E.I., 145–147). God has a merciful design in all your crosses, trials, and afflictions (H.E.I., 56–74). When this is accepted, and afflictions thus sanctified, the penitent sufferer will put his trust in God only. Thus the prodigal was starved back. "He began to be in want"—and it was a blessed want that led him to think of his father's house, and resolved him to return. You have no reason to complain when your earthly props are taken away, if thus you are induced to take fresh hold of God.

II. What is said of their renewed experience. "But shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel." Glance at three views of it. 1. *It is an enlightened confidence.* Confidence is the offspring both of ignorance and wisdom; ignorance leads some persons to entrust precious deposits to strangers or to villains, but the wise man seeks first to know those in whom he is asked to trust. It is foolish to trust without inquiry, and to refuse to trust the trustworthy. The Christian stays himself upon God, because he has ascertained what His character is (Ps. ix. 107; 2 Tim. i. 12). 2. *Their confidence is very extensive.* It covers all times (Ps. lxii. 8; Isa. xxvi. 4); all events that can awaken our anxiety; every condition in which we can be found; all that appertains to life and godliness, not only grace, but glory; not only our journey's end, but also the way. Thus it should be with us, but it is not always so. Strange to say, while we readily trust God for eternal life, we often find it difficult to trust Him for what we need in this life. How foolish is this (Rom. viii. 32; Ps. lxxxiv. 11)! 3. *It is a blessed confidence* (Prov. xxix. 25; Ps. cxxv. 1; Isa. xxvi. 3; Jer. xvii. 7, 8; H.E.I., 1191–1934; P.D., 1157, 1160).

III. **The reality of their change.** "They shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, *in truth.*" That is the important thing (Ps. li. 6). This confidence is distinguishable, 1, *from mere pretensions.* There are those who profess to know God, but in works deny Him. It seems strange that persons should act the hypocrite here, for what do they gain (Job xx. 5, xxvii. 8)? 2. *From imaginary confidence.* Persons may not endeavour to deceive others, yet they may deceive themselves (Prov. xxx. 12). How unreal may be the confidence that seems most assured. (Comp. Mark xiv. 27–31, with verse 50.) Therefore—

> "Beware of Peter's word,
> Nor confidently say,
> I never will deny Thee, Lord,
> But grant, I never may."

William Jay: Sunday Evening Sermons and Thursday Evening Lectures, pp. 290–296.

The Remnants of Society.

x. 20–23. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, &c.*

We can hardly understand such language as this, because in our national life and personal history we have never been subject to those strange mutations which befell the kingdom of Israel. We can hardly understand what it means where a whole nation is torn up by the roots, and carried away into a foreign land; and where, by and by, in the capricious mood of some despot, a portion of them are allowed to go back again,—a mere fragment. For in the carrying away of a million people, how many perish! And when a few are gathered together, and they turn to go back, how much is this remnant to be pitied! Wandering from place to place in the promised land, crossing the Jordan, finding a heap where once there was a flourishing city, drawing near to the home of their ancestry and finding it in the hands of foreigners, themselves regarded as intruders and outcasts, what a harrowing experience theirs must be!

It was under such circumstances as these that the prophets did their chief work. It was one of their principal functions to encourage a nation plunged into profound despondency. In this chapter, the prophet, with words of cheer, and with an inexpressible richness of imagery, comforts the poor, despoiled band of people, and makes them feel that the hand of power shall not for ever be so strong against them.

Looked at in its interior spirit, as God meant that it should be viewed, is it not calculated to encourage and comfort people who are in desolateness and distress? Think what is meant by "*a remnant.*" It does not mean simply a few; neither does it mean merely the last things; though it includes both these ideas. There are "remnants" in the tailor's shop, in the carpenter's shop, in the household after a meal, in the harvest field—the waste and refuse that is left after the main and best parts have been taken away and used. So, in all the phases of society there is a remnant constantly coming up; it is the portion which is left after the better or more favoured have been culled out and used; the unsuccessful men, and the men who have broken down; and it is in respect to the remnants of society that I am going to speak this morning.

Consider God's great tenderness towards the remnant of His people. . . . Did you ever think of the remnants of society—how numerous they are, and how much they are to be pitied? We are observant of the prosperous and successful, but who cares for the remnants of society? God does!

Let us look at some of these remnants. I. *Those who are broken in health, and are utterly turned away by that reason from all that they sought.* How many they are! How full of sorrow is their lot! By accident or disease suddenly rendered useless! Like a ship cast upon the land, where the sun beats upon it, and the heat shrinks and cracks it, and opens the seams wider and wider, till by and by it drops to pieces. So it is their pitiful lot to be able to do nothing but wait for the end. II. *Those who have misapplied their powers, and consequently have failed.* How many give themselves to professions for which they are utterly unfit! Every day men are ruined because they do not know what they are, nor what they are set to do, and are not willing to do the things which they could do, but are aspiring to do the things which they are not fitted for. III. *Men who were adapted to their work, but who were overtaxed, and who had not the endurance which their circumstances required.* Hundreds of men, under the intense strain of modern society, break down; and then all is gone so far as they are concerned. IV. *A great many more break down from a secret mismanagement of themselves.* They live in neglect or violation of the simplest and most fundamental laws of health, or they indulge in vices that are destruc

tive. V. *Those who have violated the laws of society, and have been detected, convicted, and branded with shame.* It is scarcely possible for such men, however earnestly and honestly they may desire it, to be anything else than mere "remnants" in society.

1. In regard to all those who are in this great struggling mass—the remnants of society—I have to say: Take pity on them; have compassion on them; do something to rescue, to strengthen, to cheer some of them. 2. To all who are cast down and suffering, I say, There is a God who is sorry for you. If men disown you, God thinks of you, and will succour you. Beware, then, of desperation. Do not throw yourselves away. Th ugh all else should be against you, God is for you. There is immortality—seek for that. There is a bright and blessed manhood just beyond. If you have failed for this life, do not fail for the other too. There is very much that may yet be done, even in the afternoon and twilight of men's lives, if they are hopeful and active. Do not give yourselves over to complaining and mourning Be patient. However low you may have got, you have not got as low as Christ was when He died a death of shame and contumely for us. Shall the servant be greater than his Lord? Be patient. It cannot be long before God's angel shall come, and then your troubles shall be over. Pluck up your courage. Wait. And if need be, suffer, and suffer patiently to the end. Let everything go but this: "God loves me; heaven waits for me;" and in that hope stand. Though the world perish around you, *stand*, comforted and cheered by the confidence that God cares for you as the remnants of His Israel (H. E. I., 958–961. 2310, 2311, 4015–4018). — *Henry Ward Beecher: Christian World Pulpit* (vol. iii. p. 43).

Isaiah's Vision of the King and of His Kingdom.

CHAPTERS XI. AND XII.

This is one of the visions that Isaiah *saw* (chap. i. 1, ii. 1, &c.). He was a dreamer of dreams. With a keen perception, not surpassed, of the men and things actually surrounding him, much of his life was passed in an ideal and future world. There he found comfort and strength to endure the sorrows that otherwise would have crushed him. At the outset of his ministry, when the great king who had done so much to restore the prosperity of the nation was about to be removed, there was vouchsafed to him a vision of the King immortal, eternal, invisible, throned in the temple, and surrounded by the exalted intelligences who do His will (chap. vi. 1–4); and now, at the close of the wicked and disastrous reign of Ahaz, when his hopes concerning his race would naturally have failed, there was granted him a vision of a King of righteousness and peace, who on earth would rule over a kingdom such as the world had never seen. His soul had been stirred and appalled by a vision of disaster and woe. He saw the king of Assyria, then the terror of the earth, utterly broken, his vast armies hewn down as forests fall before the axes of the woodmen (chap. x. 33, 34); a vision of blood and terror which may well have filled him with trembling. But just as sometimes the sweetest daybreak follows a night of storm, this vision of terror fades away, and he sees—

I. A King (chap. xi. 1–5). 1. *Royally descended*, "a rod out of the stem of *Jesse*." A simple farmer on the hills of Bethlehem, and yet a father of kings. Not an accident. We are here confronted with the mystery of blood, of race. No common man was he from whom sprang David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, and a long line of kings. In his ordinary hours, Isaiah may well have derived assurance that the vision that gladdened him was given him from above, from the fact that it was in harmony with God's promise (2 Sam. vii. 12–16). Without

dismay he could view the royal house lapsing into the obscurity from which it sprang—becoming merely a house of *Jesse* once more—assured that in His own time God would again raise it up to glory (α). It is always well when our hopes rest upon the Word of God. 2. *Royalty endowed;* a King by truest "right divine," because possessed of royal qualities of heart and mind (chap. xi. 2, 3). Of the thousands who have sat on thrones, how few have possessed them! How many have ruled over the miserable wretches subject to their sway merely by the craft of the serpent or the cruelty of the tiger! Of those who have been popular, how many have owed their popularity to mere physical prowess and politic good-nature (Richard I., Charles II.)! How few have endeavoured to approach the Biblical conception of what a ruler ought to be (Deut. xvii. 14–20; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3; Ps. lxxii. 4; Prov. xx. 28)! In the marvellous superiority of that conception to anything that has prevailed among men, have we not another proof that the sacred writers were indeed inspired by the Spirit of God? 3. *Ruling in righteousness;* using His marvellous endowments for the welfare of those subjected to His authority (chap. xi. 3–5); not judging of things or men by their mere appearance, nor by common report; caring for the poor, befriending the shrinking and helpless, fearless in His dispensation of justice; His very words being swords that smote and overthrew the arrogant oppressor; made strong by the very righteousness which merely politic men would have feared to display in view of the might of iniquity in this disordered world; a Hero of the truest and divinest kind, in actual life setting forth the ideal to which the noblest knights in the purest days of chivalry strove to conform. Such was the King whom the prophet "saw" in an age when "ruler" was merely another word for tyrant and oppressor. Surely the vision so fair and wondrous was given him from above!

II. He saw also THE KINGDOM. 1. *A kingdom of righteousness* (chap. xi. 9). The kingdom necessarily resembles the king. Appalling is the influence of a court upon a nation. Correspondingly great is the responsibility of those who sit in high places. 2. *A kingdom of peace.* Set forth by the most beautiful symbolism (chap. xi. 6–10, 13). 3. *A kingdom of prosperity.* Those included in it are no longer miserable exiles and bond slaves; rather they rule over those by whom they were spoiled and oppressed (chap. xi. 14). This is the true interpretation of a symbol that is in itself harsh and repulsive. The coarseness of the symbol is due to the coarseness of the minds it was first intended to touch. 4. *A kingdom of gladness and joy.* There pervades it the gladness of exiles who have been restored to their own land (chap. xi. 15, 16); the true and religious joy of men who recognise that the deliverances which inspire their songs have been wrought for them by God (chap. xii. 1–5); the joy of men who are absolutely assured of continual safety (chap. xii. 2, 6).

Was all this merely a bright vision? 1. It has been already fulfilled in part. 2. In our own day it is being fulfilled more completely than ever before. 3. It shall yet be fulfilled triumphantly (β). Let us then, 1. Recognise and rejoice in the fact that we are living under the rule of this righteous King. This is at least the dawning of the "day" which Isaiah saw (Matt. xiii. 16). 2. Exult in view of the certain future of our race. The kingdom of God shall come generation after generation with mightier power (H. E. I., 3421–3423). 3. Labour as well as pray that future may be hastened.

(α.) The image is now transferred to the state and king of Israel, which is also to be cut down to the stump, like the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. But out of that stump, and from its living roots, shall grow up a scion—one of those slender shoots which we see springing up from, and immediately around, the stock of a truncated tree. A king of the race of Jesse shall sit on the throne of his fathers, in accordance with the covenant made with David (Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4). —*Strachey.*

When the axe is laid to the imperial power of the world, it falls without hope (chap. x. 33,

84). But in Israel spring is returning (chap. xi. 1). The world-power resembles the cedar-forest of Lebanon; the house of David, on the other hand, because of its apostasy, is like the stump of a felled tree, like a root without stem, branches, or crown. The world-kingdom, at the height of its power, presents the most striking contrast to Israel and the house of David in the uttermost depth announced in chapter vi., *fin.*, mutilated and reduced to the lowliness of its Bethlehemitish origin. But whereas the Lebanon of the imperial power is thrown down, to remain prostrate, the house of David renews its youth. . . . Out of the stump of Jesse—*i.e.*, out of the remnant of the chosen royal family, which has sunk down to the insignificance of the house from which it sprang—there comes forth a twig (*choter*), which promises to supply the place of the trunk and crown; and down below, in the roots covered with earth, and only rising a little above it, there shows itself a *nētzer*, *i.e.*, a fresh, green shoot. In the historical account of the fulfilment, even the ring of the words of the prophecy is noticed: the *nētzer*, at first so humble and insignificant, was a poor despised *Nazarene* (Matt. ii. 23).—*Delitzsch.*

(*β.*) For additional suggestions on this part of the subject, see outlines on pages 71–73, 101, 182, 186, 191–194.

The Spirit of the Lord.

xi. 2. *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.*

This is declared concerning the Messiah. Short as this declaration is, some of the profoundest of all truths are involved in it. It is implied that God is a person, that from Him there goes forth an influence by which the character of other persons is affected, and that all that qualified Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah came from God. Let us think of these things. Do not be deterred from doing so by the idea that they are transcendental, far away from our daily life. They need not be so; we we shall be very blameworthy if we make them so.

I. **God is a person.** There are those who would have us put away this faith. In their view, God is merely the great controlling Force behind all other forces, the life of the universe, diffused through it, manifesting itself in innumerable forms. As it is the same life in the tree that manifests itself in root, trunk, branch, spray, twig, leaf, blossom, fruit, so all things that exist are not the creations of a personal will, but the manifestations of an impersonal and all-pervading life; all forces, convertible the one into the other, are but varying forms of the one underlying force. Every individual life is but a wave that seems for a moment to be separated from the one universal ocean of life; it leaps up from it, falls back into it, is absorbed by it. True, these waves are often strangely diverse—Nero and St. Paul, John Howard and Napoleon, the Virgin Mary and Lucrezia Borgia; but in that great Unity of which they are all manifestations, there is an all-comprehensive reconciliation, though it may elude our grasp. For Pantheism, many would have us put away the doctrine of a personal God. But this exchange, if it could be forced upon us by some logical necessity (which it is not), would not be a gain, but a tremendous loss. For, 1. *There would be a tremendous loss to the heart.* A force may be feared, but not loved. To gravitation we owe much, but no one ever professed to love it. A force cannot be loved, because it does not love. Strike out of our life all that comes to us from the confidence that God loves us, and from the responsive love that springs up in our hearts towards Him, and how much is lost! Then there is no longer any assurance amid the mysteries of life, nor consolation in its sorrows. In a word, we are orphaned: we can no longer say, "Our Father, who art in heaven." There is no longer a Father, knowing us, loving us, causing all things to work together for our good; there is only a Force, to which it is useless to appeal, against which it is impossible to contend. 2. *We should also lose one of the greatest of all helps to a noble life.* Not to dwell on the fact that to speak of virtue or vice would then be absurd,

—then we should no longer sin, we should merely make mistakes,—consider how much the world owes to the aspiration to be like God which has stirred so many noble souls. Through them the average morality of the world has been marvellously raised; but this would have been impossible but for the stimulus these inspiring souls found in the character of God. That is the first fact of which this text reminds us, that God is a person from whom a spirit—an influence—can go forth affecting the character of other persons.

II. From God such an influence does go forth. The possibility is a glorious fact. That from God a "spirit" should go forth, and that it should do so invisibly, is in accordance with all that we know of the universe which God has made, and which is in some sort a revelation of Him. 1. Nothing in the universe is unrelated. From orb to orb influences go forth by which they are mutually affected. 2. The mightiest influences are invisible. In all this, the material is a counterfact and revelation of the spiritual. It would be altogether abnormal, if from God there did not go forth an influence operating upon and affecting other persons. It is invisible, but its effects are recognisable. One of them is the activity of conscience, rightly understood. Another is the moral growth and refinement which those in whom it is most conspicuous, most invariably and distinctly attribute to influences exerted upon them by God. Even Socrates did so. This also is a doctrine full of hope and comfort. If we need moral transformation, there streams from God an influence capable of effecting it: to that influence let us submit ourselves, and the transformation shall come to pass; the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon us, and we shall become like Him.

III. To the influence exerted upon Him by the Spirit of the Lord, Jesus of Nazareth owed all that qualified Him to be the Messiah (vers. 2–5). That which was born of the Virgin Mary was a true human child. A sinless child, yet sinless not as the result of the sinlessness of the mother (as Rome teaches), but of the influence of the Spirit of the Lord resting upon Him from the beginning of His earthly life. His was a real humanity—*our* humanity sanctified. All that was pure, noble, Godlike in Him was "born not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How full of comfort and hope is this truth also! To us also is offered the same Spirit. Nothing can be more express than the declarations that we may have it if we will, and that, if we have it, the ultimate result will be that we shall be found partakers of the holiness of God. Let us not be unwisely cast down by the frailty and pollution of our nature; if the Spirit of the Lord rest upon us, the purity and the strength of God will become ours, and at length the Father will say of each of us, as He did of Jesus of Nazareth, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The Righteous Judge.

xi. 3. *And He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears.*

A glorious difference between our Lord and ourselves. "He knew what was in man," and needed not the evidence of external signs, which often mislead *us*. He could deal with the motives of the heart (H. E. I., 3332, 4147). Not by human sight, but by Divine *insight*, He judged the conduct and character of men. 1. Our judgment is enfeebled by *ignorance*. We do not see and hear all, and from our imperfect knowledge of facts we draw wrong and often disastrous conclusions (H. E. I., 2997–3005). But our Lord could go behind the visible works, and detect what often deceived men—*e.g.*, His treatment of pharisaism. 2. Our judgment is enfeebled

by *prejudice*. This is often the result of ignorance. Seeing only certain sides of men, we dislike them, and frame our judgments accordingly—*e.g.*, Nathanael (John i. 46). With no better reason than Nathanael had, we regard many a man as an enemy, or otherwise place him in a false light. But our Lord dealt with none in this way. Seeing men as they really were, no preconceived opinions led Him to unworthy conclusions. 3. *Partiality* enfeebles and perverts our judgment. Judging by sight and hearing, we approve of one man more than another, because he has certain artful or pleasing methods for winning our favour: flattery, offers of gain, &c. (P. D., 1275, 1281, 1283). But our Lord could not be won in this way (Mark xii. 14; John vi. 15). He was infinitely compassionate, tender, forgiving, but no feeble partiality interfered to prevent most righteous judgment. 4. Our judgment is often perverted by *passion*. In the pursuit of some unlawful and all-absorbing aim, we become too disturbed to weigh calmly even the evidences we can see and hear. We look at everything in the light of our false affection, and are thereby rendered absolutely incapable of beholding others in their true light, especially if they stand in our way and oppose our progress (P. D., 2060). But the one absorbing and unremittent purpose of Jesus of Nazareth was to do the will of His Heavenly Father, and to finish the work He had given Him to do. Hence He dwelt always on a pure altitude, in whose clear atmosphere He saw men and things as they are. 5. *Our natural depravity* is also a serious hindrance to our right judging. Our very organs of knowledge, our affections, our conscience, have been perverted. Let a man be ever so disposed to take correct views of men and things, there will be some flaw in his vision, some defect in his hearing. Hence there are times when we cannot accept as final the judgment of the best and holiest of men. But Christ had no secret evil to lead Him wrong.

In view of all this, how fitting it is that Christ should be our judge! How well, too, He is qualified to be the merciful High Priest whom we need (Heb. iv. 15, 16). He who tenderly sympathises with us is He who perfectly knows us (H. E. I., 956; P. D., 462).—*William Manning.*

The Universal Diffusion and Redemptive Power of the Knowledge of God.

(*Missionary Sermon.*)

xi 9. *They shall not hurt nor destroy, &c.*

We have here a picture of the golden age. I. The whole earth shall be as Mount Zion. II. Shall be freed from injustice and violence. III. Shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. 1. Wherein this knowledge consists. 2. To what extent it shall prevail—universal, deep. 3. By what means it is to be diffused.—*J. Tyth, D.D.: Homiletical Treasury* (p. 18).

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy *mountain*, for the *earth* shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." It seems clear that in these words the prophet intended to be understood as speaking of the whole earth. He would scarcely, in the same sentence, have used the expressions in question—the *holy mountain* in the first clause, and the *earth* in the other—if by these expressions he had not meant the same thing, namely, the whole globe of the earth, when the dwellers thereon should come to be true worshippers, like those who first worshipped at Mount Zion, and who were a type of the greater assembly of worshippers, the holy and universal Church, which in the fulness of time would be established.

I. *The prophet grounds the hope of that reformed and purified state of the moral*

world, described in the beautiful words of the text, upon the increase of religious knowledge which he saw to be coming. "They shall not hurt . . . *for* the earth shall be full of the *knowledge of the Lord.*" II. These words may be taken as *descriptive of the legitimate effect of Christian knowledge.* The general scope, aim, and tendency of gospel principles is such as would produce the change described, were it not counteracted by the tendency within us to what is wrong. III. They are more than this: they are *prophetic of the actual results of Christian knowledge.* The gospel will render war impossible. True, so-called "Christian" nations have not yet ceased to wage war with one another, nor so-called "Christian" men to rob and circumvent and ruin each other. Nevertheless, this prophecy shall yet be fulfilled. We see it in the process of fulfilment. The condition of the moral world has been meliorated by Christianity. Wars have not ceased, but their conduct has been mitigated. In their private dealings with each other, men have become more just and trustworthy. Already there are millions of men who would shrink from doing harm of any kind to their fellow-men. Compare Christendom with heathendom, and you will see what mighty changes the gospel has already wrought. The practice even of Christian men falls short of their knowledge. Nevertheless, the practice and the morals of men are, generally speaking, the best where their knowledge is the most. The prophet's words are justified by fact, and men forbear one another most, and hurt and destroy least, where knowledge is the greatest. It is a fact that life and property are more safe and secure in the Christian portion of the earth, than in any other portions. And the knowledge of the Lord grows year by year; partly through the labours of missionaries in many places; still more by the rapid growth of the nations that are Christian. The violent and lawless races of the earth are dwindling away. The only races that are increasing are those that fear God, and are willing to respect the rights, the properties, and the lives of their neighbours. Through the medium of this natural increase of peace-loving races, and through the conversion of many among the benighted nations, this prophecy is receiving a gradual, but very appreciable, fulfilment. The world is advancing, with ever-accelerating speed, towards knowledge and peace, and this declaration shall yet be literally fulfilled (H. E. I., 979, 1161–1168; P. D., 2465, 2466).

Application.—1. We are permitted to rejoice in the hope of a period when justice and benevolence shall prevail in the world. 2. We are required to contribute towards the realisation of this hope. This we are to do (1) by the purification of our own hearts; by the conquest of every passion and desire that would make us hurtful to our neighbours. (2) By prayer (Matt. vi. 9, 10). (3) By helping to diffuse that "knowledge of the Lord" which is the great peace-maker in the earth.—*A. Gibson, M.A.: Sermons on Various Subjects; Second Series* (pp 246–265).

In this and the preceding verses we have a beautiful picture of a state of human society entirely different from anything that has been witnessed since the Fall. The prophet beholds changes in human character so great that he feels he can only symbolise them by transformations in the members of the animal kingdom of the most astonishing kind. Verses 6–8 *are* symbolical, and are intended to excite within us the liveliest anticipations of the glorious effects that would follow the universal proclamation and acceptation of the gospel. Thus we are led to speak of the nature, the diffusion, and the effect of the knowledge of the Lord.

I. ITS EXALTED NATURE. By "the knowledge of the Lord" may be meant that of which He is the revealer (2 Chron. xxx. 22), or that of which He is the theme (2 Pet. ii. 20). God can only be revealed by Himself; and He has given us a threefold revelation of Himself—in nature, in providence, and

in Holy Scripture. In the latter we have the record of the fullest revelation which He has vouchsafed, that given us in His Son. God is never truly known by man until He is known in Christ. "The knowledge of the Lord" and "the gospel" are terms of the same meaning.

II. ITS DESTINED DIFFUSION. The figure employed by the prophet brings before us impressively the universality of its diffusion. The imagination is called in to instruct our faith (α). The world-wide diffusion of the gospel is a matter—1. Of *prophetic certainty.* Nothing could be more plain than the prophetic declarations concerning this matter. But if any man asks *when* the promise will be fulfilled, only one answer can be given him (Acts i. 7). 2. Involving *Divine agency.* Utterly false is the notion that, after creating the universe, God withdrew from it, and left it to go on by its own momentum (John v. 17); and utterly false is the notion that, after giving the gospel to the world, God has left it to make its own way therein. By Divine agency men are raised up to proclaim it (Eph. iv. 11). While they are so engaged Christ Himself is with them (Matt. xxviii. 20); and while they preach, the Holy Spirit strives in the hearts of men to prepare and dispose them to receive the glad tidings (1 Thess. i. 5). When, therefore, we look at the glorious promise of our text, we must not forget that God Himself is working for its accomplishment. This will save us from unbelief and despair concerning it. 3. Involving *human instrumentality.* Not that this is absolutely necessary. Without human husbandry God could have caused the earth to bring forth food for man and beast, and without human instrumentality He could have saved the world. But it has pleased Him to commit to us the Word of reconciliation. The consequent duty of preaching it must be taken in connection with, and regarded as the condition of, the promise; just as the promise that there shall be a harvest till the end of the world is conditioned by man's sowing the seed in the appointed season. The promise must not be used as an excuse for indolence, but as a stimulus to industry.

III. ITS BLESSED EFFECT. The gospel is a harmonising power. It has a transforming efficacy equal to any that would be needed to bring about a literal fulfilment of verses 6–8. Wherever it comes in its saving power, it new creates human hearts, and thus dries up the causes of hatred and discord at their fountain. For it is a principle, 1, of *righteousness*, and, 2, of *love.* Hence it brings peace. For all discord is due to injustice that is prompted by selfishness (James iv. 1). Where righteousness and love combine and rule, there must be peace and security; for the very desire to injure is taken away. The universal prevalence of the gospel necessarily means universal peace (H. E. I., 1126, 1127, 1129).

1. This suggests the answer to the questions, Why Christian nations make war against each other, and why even in Christian churches there are fierce contentions? The answer is, either that those nations or churches are Christian only in name, or that they have only very partially attained to "the knowledge of the Lord." They are only in the infant-class in Christ's great school; as they learn of Him, their rivalries and hatreds will pass away. 2. The gospel being so blessed in its effects, it is plain that it is the duty of all good men to extend the knowledge of it.—*John Rawlinson.*

A remarkable declaration this, especially if the Hebrew prophets were, as some learned sceptics tell us, men of narrow mind, worshipping a merely local god, and hating all men not descended from Jacob. By the noble simile employed by Isaiah two ideas are suggested—1. *Universality.* Mankind is the area to be covered. 2. *Ease.* All the creeks, bays, channels, and broad highways of the vast ocean are filled in their appointed time. The mighty tide rises, sweeps onward, and the work is done. There was one great flood-tide of gospel-truth in the days of the apostles, and there is a

greater still to come. Meanwhile, many difficulties attend the efforts of God's people to extend the knowledge of His truth; but, in the world's fulness, great ease will characterise the progress and triumphs of the gospel (Ps. cx. 3; Heb. viii. 11). This declaration suggests two great subjects:—

I. THE HOPE OF THE WORLD. Shut the Bible, and our outlook on the world and its future is dark and sad. Open it, and let its light shine into our minds, and with the light will come encouragement and hope. 1. If it is true that "the earth . . . the sea," then God takes an interest in the affairs of the world, and takes an interest in them *now*. This mighty world is not left to drift into an unknown and perilous future without a steersman to guide it. 2. If God makes such abundant provision for the instruction of men in the knowledge of Himself, then He will be accessible to them when, by that knowledge, they are led to approach Him; and He is accessible to us. 3. Himself opening for men a way of access to Him, we may be sure that when they avail themselves of it He will deal with them in the way of mercy and love; and so He will deal with us. Who can doubt this who looks on the face of Christ, through whom God has given us the truest knowledge of Himself (2 Cor. iv. 6)? 4. He means to be known to the *world*, and therefore His gracious offers extend to *all*, to us.

II. THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH. In view of this declaration, 1. *Take enlarged views of your work.* Think how much remains to be done. Even if you could suppose that your family, your street, your town, your country were filled with the blessed tide of the knowledge of the Lord, yet think of the *earth*, and all its myriad claims resting upon the servants of God. 2. *Spare no efforts in promoting the cause of Christian missions.* In advancing these, you are working in harmony with the great purposes of God, and for an object which is dear to Him—that object for which He has already given His Son! Will you withhold from it the money with which He has entrusted you, and for which you will have to give account at the last day? 3. There are many present difficulties in the prosecution of mission-work, but meanwhile *take comfort from the large purposes of God.* "Have faith in God." His plans are vast, but His glorious promises are great as His counsels, and His resources as glorious as His promises. The process of filling the earth with "the knowledge of the Lord" may seem to us to be tedious, the obstacles may be many, the time may be long; if the work were left to us, it would be hopeless; but GOD will hasten it all in His time.—*William Manning.*

It is here declared that there is yet to dawn upon the world an era of perfect light, and that that shall be also and therefore an era of perfect love. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, FOR the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord."

It is a mystery, but it is a fact, that knowledge is not necessarily a blessing. The devils believe—and therefore know—yet remain devils still (Jas. iii. 19). Many men of unholy life have been men of eminent knowledge (Rom. i. 21). But this is a moral monstrosity, a result of the unnatural condition into which we have been brought by sin; just as in certain forms of disease food becomes poison. Knowledge is one of those forces which naturally tend to elevate and sanctify (H. E. I., 3106); to know God truly is eternal life (John xvii. 3); and the declaration is, that knowledge shall be world-wide, and that by it the world shall be morally revolutionised. Remembrance of two facts will give intelligence and strength to our faith in these glorious predictions. 1. *As man's knowledge of God has grown, the human race has risen.* Except in those abnormal cases already referred to, it may be declared that men cannot learn to know God and remain as they were—*e.g.*, wherever the knowledge of the unity of God is restored to man, idolatry becomes impossible;

as soon as the knowledge of the spirituality of God really enters the mind, formalism in worship becomes an impossibility. So every truth concerning God, as soon as it is really known, becomes a correcting and converting force. The tendency of this knowledge, as of light, is to quicken and beautify. The way to grow in grace is to grow in the knowledge of Christ (2 Pet. iii. 18). 2. *The knowledge of God is a thing that grows, and grows slowly, in the human soul.* This is true of all knowledge (β). But in proportion as it grows, sanctification takes place in the individual life, reformation in the national life (γ). It is the most radical and successful of all revolutionists. It is impossible for us to dream of the changes it will accomplish upon the earth. But this we know, that by it war and every form of violence shall be abolished (text; Isa. ii. 4, &c.)

In this subject there is, 1. *A complete justification of all missionary enterprises.* They are not visionary schemes foredoomed to failure; they are intensely practical, and shall be triumphantly successful. The time may be far off, but it is advancing, when every man shall know God (δ). The effect of that knowledge will be the destruction of the desire to destroy or injure. 2. *An argument for patience.* In view of the wrongs that prevail upon the earth, many noble souls find it difficult to exercise it. Of finer taste, of clearer vision, of truer sympathy with God than is common amongst men, the wickedness that triumphs in the world fills them with continual agony. It drives them almost into atheism. They ask, "Can God see these things, and not use His power to bring them to an end? If there were a God, would He not instantly smite the oppressors with destruction?" Let them be patient. God does see; God does feel; God is hastening on the better day by the only means by which it can really be brought in. Another deluge would not cleanse the world from crime; if but eight souls were spared, sin would once more begin to prevail. The era of purity and peace can be ushered in only by the revelation of God to man, and thus it is advancing towards us; thus it is already begun; between Christian and heathen lands there is a real contrast; and ere long there shall be as great a contrast between Christian lands uplifted by a fuller knowledge of God and these lands as they now are. The millennium is not merely a prophetic dream, it shall be a glorious fact. Patience! (H. E. I., 1134, 1135, 1166–1168, 3421–3423; P. D., 2465, 2466). 3. *An argument for hopeful Christian effort.* We must not merely dream of the millennium, we must labour to hasten its dawn. Work is needful: Sunday-school work, &c. Every one who prays, "Thy kingdom come," thereby, unless he means to mock God, pledges Himself to work to hasten its coming, and thus to be a "fellow-labourer with God." There is need for individual effort, and for united effort. Such effort should always be hopeful. We are not attempting what is impossible; we are working in the line of God's promises, and with God! Remembering that the sense of our own weakness will not unduly depress us. It does not require a giant's strength to row with the tide; and a mightier force than that of ocean is bearing us on to a victory that shall fill earth with blessing and heaven with gladness.

(α.) "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, *as the waters cover the sea.*" The expression is remarkable for its force. In looking over the face of the ocean, no differences are to be perceived: one part is not fuller than the other; one part is not covered, and another left dry; but all is one unbroken stream, filling and covering the whole. So shall it be with the Word of God among men. It shall not be known to some, and hidden from others. It shall not be fully declared in one place, and only partially set forth in another. Whatever knowledge it pleases Him to give at all, shall be given to all men equally and without distinction. Such is clearly the purpose of God in His own appointed time.—*W. H. Sulivan.*

"*As the waters cover the sea.*" The idea of universality could scarcely have been better expressed than by this magnificent simile. You have looked forth on the illimitable expanse of waters with wonder and awe.

Your imagination has followed the depths far beyond the lowest tide-line to the unfathomed valleys and caverns that form the ocean bed; and you have endeavoured to take fully into your mind the thought that the lowest depths and the most distant shores were filled and covered by the all-diffusive and all-searching element.—*Rawlinson.*

(β.) The knowledge of God comes into the soul as a king is born into a country over which he is ultimately to rule; at the beginning it is but a babe; for a long time it is weak, and needs to be defended and nurtured; many years elapse before it rules; rarely in this life does it exercise full power and undisputed sway.

(γ.) Many evils continue to exist and flourish even in Christian lands, because their contrariety to the character of God has not yet been apprehended and felt. Many godly men were slave-holders and slave-dealers, because they did not fully know God. But now the knowledge of God has so grown among men, that it is no longer possible in a Christian land for a godly man to be a slave-holder. So with polygamy, which was once practised without scruple by some of the noblest and most devout men who ever lived. This practice has been killed, not by any express prohibition, but by growth among men of the knowledge of God. That knowledge is predestined still further to grow, and to kill many things more.

The Ensign of the Nations.

xi. 10. *And in that day there shall be, &c.*

I. In the two parts of this verse we have a twofold metaphorical representation of the Redeemer: one expressed, one implied. 1. An ensign of the people = banner or standard, such as is set up as a rallying-point around which, (1) the subjects of a king assemble to do him homage; and (2) the soldiers of an army gather to receive the commands and exhortations of their general. 2. This second use of a standard leads to the second metaphorical representation of the Redeemer, that of a victorious general: "His rest shall be glorious." We are thus directed to the final result of the uplifting of Christ as an ensign: the great campaign brought to a successful conclusion, the Victor in it rests gloriously, surrounded by the soldiers whom He has led on to triumph, and the people to whom He has given liberty and peace.

II. Consider how these predictions have been fulfilled. 1. By the preaching of the gospel Christ has been lifted up, and as the result men of all nations have sought unto Him, and will seek Him more and more. 2. Having done and suffered all that was necessary ultimately to secure the final victory, He has taken His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and rests there gloriously; the glory of His rest arising from the number of the subjects who do Him homage, and of the soldiers who delight to fight His battles, from the triumphs which He has already enabled them to achieve, and from the prosperity and peace of all His people.

We shall make a great mistake if we end by thus admiringly noting how this ancient prophecy has been, and is being, fulfilled in the history of the world. *We* are among the Gentiles of whom our text speaks: have we sought unto the glorious Person of whom it speaks? You desire to do so. Do so, then, 1. *For right purposes;* not merely that you may be delivered from suffering, but that you may be delivered from sin; not merely that you may ultimately gain admission to heaven, but that you may here and now render to Him the homage and the service to which He is entitled. 2. *In a right spirit;* not vainly dreaming that you have, or can win, any claim upon His regard, but recognising that you can appeal only to His mercy, and that without it you are lost; and making this appeal penitently and believingly. So coming to Him, He will be found of you. He will cause you to share in His rest, by causing you to share in His triumphs; inspired and upheld by Him, you shall trample under foot the world, the flesh, the devil, and the fear of death. Your whole being will be at rest; your understanding no longer harassed by perplexing doubts; your conscience stilled and gladdened by a righteous peace; your affections

centred at last around Him who alone is worthy of their supreme love; and this threefold rest, so sweet and blessed now, shall be perfected and perpetuated in heaven.—*George Smith, D.D.*

The prophet here foresees that the Saviour's mission and work will so exalt Him in the eyes of the nations, that they will turn to Him as the one object and desire of their souls. (Compare John xii. 32.) The prediction declares that Christ would be a banner to attract men, that He would be the object of universal search, and that men in finding Him would attain to true rest and glory.

I. THE BANNER. 1. A banner is naturally "lifted up;" only thus can its purpose be accomplished (chap. xiii. 2; xviii. 3). Apt image this of Christ. Not merely in His death on Calvary. That exaltation was followed by His being lifted higher still by the preaching of the gospel, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 14), by the devout lives of all His true followers. 2. A banner has usually some emblem or device representative of some great cause, or expressive of some great truth. (Give instances.) So when "Christ and Him crucified" are uplifted clearly in the view of men, they see God's hatred of sin, His love of man, and His provision for man's future happiness and glory.

II. THE OBJECT OF UNIVERSAL SEARCH. "To it shall the Gentiles seek." Search for Christ characterises all races of men (Hag. ii. 7) and all periods of time (Luke x. 24). The search is often prosecuted in ignorance. Men know not for what and for whom their souls yearn; but it *is* Christ of whom unconsciously they are in quest; and it is towards Him, that by the else insatiable desires of their spiritual nature, they are being led.

III. THE FINDING OF TRUE REST. "His rest shall be glorious." 1. The rest we find in Christ is connected with a vital change effected in the heart and life. He does not simply do something *for* us; He also does a work *within* us. Every intelligent seeker knows that there can be no rest until the evil that is lodged within us is resisted and cast out (H. E. I., 1324). It is as we enter into the spirit of Christ and share His life, that we enter into rest (Matt. xi. 28–30). 2. Our new relations to God, entered into by faith in Christ Jesus, makes our rest very glorious. God is then known to us by the most precious and endearing names; He is our rock, our shield, &c. Each of these names represents to us some tender aspects of His love, some sweet ministry of His grace.

Are you in search of the highest peace, joy, holiness, rest? Here you may end your quest (1 Cor. i. 30; P. D., 481).—*William Manning.*

THE RECONCILER OF MEN.

xi. 10–16. *And in that day there shall be, &c.*

Several eminent commentators are of opinion that this prophecy will not be fulfilled until the Jews are restored as a nation to their own land. Others believe that the prophet used (it may be unconsciously) transient geographical phrases as symbols of eternal truths. Without entering upon this controversy, which can be settled only by the actual unfolding and accomplishment of God's plans as to the history of this world, let us think of the fundamental fact of the vision, that in it "the Root of David" was revealed to the prophet as *the reconciler of men.* His appearing in the world would be the setting up of a standard unto which all men, Gentiles (ver. 10) and Jews (vers. 11, 12), would seek; and before the influence then exerted upon them by Him rivalries and enmities, even though they were as inveterate and malignant as those of Judah and Ephraim (ver. 13), would disappear. No obstacles, even though they should be as immense as the geographical ones which are specified, would hinder their coming together and forming one

united and triumphant people under His benignant sway. This is only saying what the prophet has said already (chap. ii. 4; ix. 7), that the kingdom of Christ would be a kingdom of peace. Consider—

I. How marvellously and gloriously this prediction has been fulfilled. To appreciate this, we must recall the condition of the world at the time when "the day" of which our text speaks dawned upon it. Nations were everywhere divided from each other by jealousies and hatreds as virulent as those that divided Ephraim from Judah; there was peace only because they were restrained from active hostility by the strong hand of Roman power. Hatred of other nations was regarded, not as a crime, but as a duty (α). But Christ inaugurated the empire of universal brotherhood and love. Wars have not yet ceased even among nations professing Christianity, but they are no longer openly gloried in by those who wage them; they are apologised for as sad necessities. The apology is often insincere, but the fact that it is made at all is a marvellous tribute to the influence and authority of Christ. Wherever His true followers meet, national distinctions are forgotten, and they feel drawn to each other by a mightier and sweeter bond. As the centuries pass away, the love of Christ becomes more and more the uniting power of the world.

II. How sadly imperfect the fulfilment of this prediction still is! The era of universal peace has not yet dawned. The world is still cursed by wars and rumours of wars. Millions of men are maintained in constant readiness for war. There are bitter contentions among the sections of the Christian Church, these tribes of the modern Israel. Class is divided from class. So-called Christian families are saddened by bitter feuds.

III. The blessedness of the era that shall yet dawn upon this world. The Christian often dreams of it; his dreams are sweet as those which hungry men have of banquets, and shipwrecked sailors drifting helplessly on rafts in the wide ocean have of their native village and of meeting with their loved ones there; and in their waking hours they, too, are apt to be saddened by the fear that their dreams too are as utterly incapable of realisation. But it is not so. They shall all be realised, for the authority of Christ shall yet be universal, real, absolute; and all the listening angels shall not be able to detect one sound of discord rising from the round world, for the whole world shall be full of the peace of Christ (P. D., 2465, 2466, 2676).

IV. Our duty in regard to this prediction. We are not merely to dream dreams of the blessedness of the era that shall yet be ushered in. We are to *do* something to hasten its dawning. 1. We are to pray for it with yearning hearts. 2. We are to do our utmost, in every possible way, to extend the knowledge of the gospel throughout the world. The gospel, not commerce, is the true civiliser and uniter of nations: commerce will prosper on the gospel triumphs. True, many converts are only nominally Christians, but in many cases that *is* the first step towards their becoming real Christians, *i.e.*, men who will pray and labour for universal peace. 3. Minor and contributory duties. (1.) The diffusion of knowledge that will tend to bring home to the understandings and hearts of men the hurtfulness of war, and of preparation for war. (2.) The discouragement and overthrow of those statesmen, to whichever party they may belong, whose policy tends to foster national animosities. (3.) The discouragement of all pursuits and things that tend to familiarise men with war and keep alive in them a passion for it, *e.g.*, the volunteer movement; pictures, poems, and newspapers that glorify successful soldiers, as if in them the noblest ideal of manhood were realised. (4.) Careful education of our children in Christ-like sentiments concerning foreign nations and war. By constant heedfulness of these duties, we shall do something to hasten the dawning of the era of universal peace and blessedness, and we shall not have lived in vain.

(a.) Ancient morality was essentially national and exclusive. Its creed was that a man is born not for himself, but for his parents, his family, and the state. The state was surrounded by others with which, unless some treaty had been concluded, it was at war. To do as much good as possible to one's own state, and as much harm as possible to all other states, was therefore the whole duty of a man."—*Ecce Homo*, p. 125, small edition. (The student will do well to read the whole chapter in which these sentences occur.)

A New Song for New Hearts.

xii. 1. *And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, &c.*

This prophecy is said by some to relate to the invasion by Sennacherib, and the marvellous deliverance therefrom. If so, it is an instance of sanctified affliction, and a lesson to us that whenever we smart under the rod we may look forward to the time when it shall be withdrawn; it is also an admonition to us, that when we escape from trial we should take care to celebrate the event with grateful praise. It is thought by others that the text mainly relates to the latter days, and I think it would be impossible to read the eleventh chapter without feeling such a reference is clear. Both these interpretations are true and instructive; but we shall find out the very soul of the passage, if we consider it as an illustration of what occurs to every one of God's people when he is brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, when he is delivered from the spirit of bondage beneath Divine wrath, and led by the Spirit of adoption into the liberty wherewith Christ makes him free. In regarding the text from this point of view, we shall first observe the prelude of this delightful song, and then listen to the song itself.

I. The prelude of this charming song—"In that day thou shalt say." Here we have the tuning of the harps, the notes of the music follow after in the succeeding sentences. Note, 1. There is a *time* for the joyous song here recorded, "In that day"—the day of the manifestation of the Divine power. 2. One word indicates the *singer*. "*Thou* shalt say." One by one we receive eternal life and peace. Religion is an individual matter. The word "thou" is spoken to those brought down into the last degree of despair. Thou broken-hearted sinner, ready to destroy thyself because of the anguish of conscience, in the day of God's abounding mercy, *thou* shalt rejoice! 3. The *Teacher* of the song. "In that day thou *shalt* say." Who but the Lord can thus command man's heart and speech? 4. The *tone* of the song. "Thou shalt *say*." The song is to be an open one, vocally uttered, heard of men. It is not to be a silent feeling, a kind of soft music whose sweetness is spent within the spirit; but in that day thou shalt testify and bear witness what the Lord has done for thee (H. E. I., 3903–3921).

II. The song itself.—1. All of it is concerning the Lord; it is all addressed to Him. "O Lord, I will praise *Thee:* though *Thou* wast angry with me, *Thine* anger is turned away." When a soul is escaped from the bondage of sin, it resembles the apostles on Mount Tabor—it sees no man but Jesus only. 2. It includes repentant memories. The Hebrew would run something like this, "O Lord, I will praise Thee; Thou wast angry with me." We do this day praise God because He made us feel His anger. "What, is a sense of anger a cause for praise?" No, not if it stood alone, but because it has driven us to Christ. The song in its deep bass includes plaintive recollections of sin pressing heavily on the spirit. 3. It contains blessed certainties. "Thine anger *is* turned away." "Can a man know that? Can he be quite sure he is forgiven?" He can be as sure of pardon as he is of his existence, as infallibly certain as he is of a mathematical proposition. The Scriptures teach that to the sinner who trusts in Jesus there is no condemnation, and

every one may know whether he is trusting in Jesus or not (H. E. I., 309, 310, 324–334, 986–989). 4. It includes holy resolutions. "I will praise Thee"—in secret, in public. For this purpose I will unite with Thy people. I will not be content unless all that I am and all that I have shall praise Thee. 5. It is a song which is peculiar in its characteristics, and appropriate only to the people of God. It is a song of strong faith, and yet of humility. Its spirit is a precious incense made up of many costly ingredients. Humility confesses, "Thou wast angry with me;" gratitude sings, "Thine anger is turned away;" patience cries, "Thou comfortest me," and holy joy springs up, and saith, "I will praise Thee." Faith, hope, love—all have their notes here, from the bass of humility up to the highest alto of glorious communion.

By way of practical results from this subject, let me speak, 1. A word of *consolation* to those who are under God's anger. God never shut up a soul in the prison of conviction, but sooner or later He released the captive. The worst thing in the world is to go unchastised; to be allowed to sin and eat honey with it, this is the precursor of damnation; but to sin, and to have the wormwood of repentance with it, this is the prelude of being saved. If the Lord has embittered thy sin, He has designs of love towards thee; His anger shall yet be turned away. 2. A word of *admonition*. Some of you have been forgiven, but are you praising God as you should? (H. E. I., 3903–3911).—*C. H. Spurgeon: Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (vol. xvi. pp. 241–250).

The preceding chapter relates to the reign of the Messiah; the end of it especially to the ingathering of the Jews—a period which will be the spiritual jubilee to the tribes of Israel, and the beginning of the millennium to the world itself. *That* is the day in which Israel shall say, "O Lord, I will praise thee," &c. This passage may be applied also to every spiritual child of Abraham. Consider—

I. The previous state referred to. "Thou wast angry with me." Anger in God is not, as it often is in us, a blind, furious passion; but a holy disapprobation of wrong, and a righteous determination to punish it (H. E. I., 2288–2294). 1. *Man's character and conduct, while in his natural state, are such as justly to expose him to the Divine anger.* What does God survey in the sinner? Ignorance, unbelief, envy, malevolence, impurity, &c. In his conduct, likewise, how much there is that must necessarily be displeasing to God!—ingratitude, disobedience, selfishness, abuse of long-suffering, the rejection of Christ. 2. *No intelligent being need be in any doubt as to whether he is, or is not, an object of the Divine anger.* The teaching of Scripture is clear (Ps. vii. 11; xxxiv. 16, &c.) This is ratified by the workings of conscience. Let any one do good secretly, and contrast his state of mind with the feelings arising after the commission of secret evil. 3. *The Divine anger is of all things to be deprecated.* Remember what its effects have been upon impenitent sinners. Think of the old world; of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; of Sodom, &c. View them written in indelible and awful characters in the history of the Israelites. Nothing can resist it, alleviate it, or deliver from it.

II. The delightful change experienced. 1. *The Divine displeasure is removed.* "Anger turned away." The cloud blotted out; no longer under condemnation, &c. This necessarily supposes a change in the creature. His enmity and opposition to God have ceased; he has seen the evil of sin; confessed and forsaken it; and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. A state of unbelief exposes us to the Divine wrath; a state of faith brings upon us His favour. God abhors the high and proud spirit; but He looks in pity on the lowly and contrite. 2. *The Divine favour is enjoyed.* "Thou comfortest me." We cannot stand in a neutral state with respect to God. The instant His anger is removed, His favour is enjoyed. Guilt, remorse, the burden of sin, are gone; and in their stead there is a sweet assurance

of acceptance with God. This comfort is real, not visionary; suitable, abiding, and inexpressibly precious; it is associated with all good, both in this life and that which is to come; it is the precursor of everlasting felicity.

III. The grateful return presented. "I will praise Thee." Acceptable praise, 1. *Includes the offering of a thankful heart.* It must arise from within; it must be the expression of the affections of the soul. Heart gratitude is alone real, and that which God will receive. 2. It must be *free and spontaneous.* "I will." Not I ought, or should, but "I will." 3. It must be *constant* (Eph. v. 20; 1 Thess. v. 18; Ps. xxxiv. 1).

APPLICATION.—Let the text be 1. *The test of our state.* Can we use it? Is it so with us? Is God our reconciled friend? 2. *The test of our spirit and conduct.* Do we love and bless God? Is it our delight to do so? 3. *Let it be attractive to the convicted, mourning sinner.* There is a way to Divine peace, and to real and heavenly comfort. Christ is that way. Come now to God through Him.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.: Pulpit Cyclopædia* (iii. 221–224).

In this verse we have a representation—I. **Of the natural condition of sinful men.** An object of Divine anger. 1. The nature of the emotion described; 2. The cause of this anger; 3. How much it is to be feared. Unlike the anger of man it is changeless, and behind it is boundless wisdom and irresistible power. II. **Of the change effected in the state of believers by Divine grace.** They are blessed, 1. By the removal of the Divine displeasure, effected by the work accomplished *for* them by the Son of God, and *in* them by the Holy Spirit. 2. In the enjoyment of Divine consolation. III. **Of the adoring thankfulness which the change demands and calls forth.** 1. The individual character of the declaration: "*Thou* shalt say." 2. The vocal proclamation: Thou "shalt *say.*" True gratitude is never silent (Ps. lxvi. 16, &c.) 3. The delightful burden of the song.—*George Smith, D.D.*

In this verse we have three pictures. I. God angry with the sinner. II. God reconciled to the sinner. III. God comforting the sinner.—*H. F. Walker.*

WELLS OF SALVATION.

xii. 3. *Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*

Salvation is the great theme of the Bible, and thus it meets man's great need. Think, I. of THE WELLS, the sources of salvation. Clearly these are not found in man himself. Salvation originated in the eternal love of God for man; it flows to sinners through the work of Jesus; it is by the influences of the Holy Spirit that the sinner is made willing to partake of it. These truly are *wells* of salvation; not rills that may dry up; not even rivers, which may fail because the streams from the mountains have failed; but wells, fountains over-flowing, inexhaustible as the nature of God. II. OF THE WATER. A beautiful symbol of a great reality. Excepting the air we breathe, there is no element so widely diffused, nor so essential to life, as water. Imagine a great city, a whole district, a ship's crew without water (α). 1. Water *revives.* How the traveller dying from thirst begins to revive the instant water touches his lips; so the salvation of the gospel imparts new life to the soul; an invigoration, moreover, that shall not pass away (John iv. 14). 2. Water *cleanses.* So does the salvation of the gospel (Rev. i. 5; Heb. ix. 14; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Zech. xiii. 1). 3. Water *fertilises.* The water of salvation enriches and fertilises the spiritual soil, so that the blossoms of hope in the early spring-time of piety, and the matured fruits of holiness in the autumn of life, adorn the garden of the

Lord (Isa. lviii. 11; Jer. xxxi. 12; Ps. i. 3; Num. xxiv. 9). III. Of THE JOY. 1. This can only be experienced by such as draw water out of the wells of salvation. Necessarily it *is* a matter of experience. There are many things that must be felt to be known, and this is one of them. 2. This joy may be expected in the very act of drawing the water of salvation. If you were to overtake a traveller in a sandy desert dying from thirst, he would begin to enjoy the very moment he became conscious of the touch of the precious fluid. So with the Christian (Rom. xv. 13). And as he may and ought to be constantly drawing from the wells of salvation, his life should always be a happy life (H. E. I., 3037–3051; P. D., 2085).

Our text may be regarded—1. As giving full permission to do that of which it speaks. However unworthy we may be, we may come to the wells of salvation, and draw as much as we need (Rev. xxii. 17; H. E. I., 2331, 2361, 2362, 4086). 2. Nay, as a command. When a sovereign prepares a banquet, and issues his invitations, those invitations have the force of commands. God has graciously provided salvation for your souls in Christ: will you turn away, and despise His love?—*John Rawlinson.*

Salvation—let us not think of it meanly. It has past, present, future aspects. Too often we content ourselves with the *past* view of it, and that in a selfish way. Twenty or thirty years ago, we "believed" and were "saved," *i.e.*, got out of harm's way. What is God's grace *doing* for us? Is it making us purer, nobler? And what are our *aspirations* and *prospects?* Are we imitators of the great Apostle (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

This comprehensive and glorious salvation, what is its source? Whence is it to be drawn? From GOD. "Behold, *God* is my salvation. . . . Therefore," &c. The third verse must never be separated in thought from the second, "With Thee is the fountain of life"—with God as revealed to us in Christ. This is the claim of Christ Himself (John viii. 37, 38) (*β*). He stands over against all the ignorance, the guilt, the pollution, and the deathfulness of man, as the infinite Fulness (1 Cor. i. 30; Col. i. 19; John i. 16; H. E. I., 934–941). All the wells of salvation are in Him; and from Him His people draw the priceless "water" with joy. This is a duty, but it is performed by them as freely and spontaneously as on a summer morning the birds fill the air with music. They do so—1. *Because the wells of salvation are free to all, and easily accessible by all.* Were it not so, we might fear that we or our friends were excluded therefrom. But God's salvation, like all His best gifts—air, light, water—is free to all alike (H. E. I., 942, 943, 2331, 2361, 2362). And it is easily accessible; no harder terms are imposed upon us than it is possible and right for us to comply with. (All this is summed up in chap. lv. 1.) 2. *Because "the wells of salvation" are inexhaustible.* Picture the fainting and despairing condition of a traveller who, in a time of scorching heat, comes to a well, and finds it empty. No such fate awaits the true seeker after God. Other sources of help will deceive and fail us (Jer. ii. 13). 3. *Because of the deep satisfaction which is derived therefrom* (John iv. 14; H. E. I., 968–971, 1658, 1659, 2738–2837, 4627–4630, 4970). 4. *Because the fulness that thus becomes ours is a source of blessing to others* (Gen. xii. 2, xxxix. 5; Prov. xviii. 4; Isa. lviii. 11; Ezek. xlvii. 12; Zech. xiv. 8; H. E. I., 1740–1743) (*γ*).

Come to the Well-spring of life. It is open to you all. Whosoever will may come. Jesus stands ready to satisfy your deepest longings.—*William Manning.*

This chapter should be read in connection with the preceding, which determines its application to the times of Messiah. The peaceful state of the Church in Hezekiah's time is made the emblem of the peaceful era of the Gospel; as the Israelites who had been carried away in various invasions

thus returned to their own country, so the nations should be gathered to the standard of Christ (Isa. xi. 10–16).

I. The sources of consolation which God has opened up to the Church in the revelation of His Son. In a dry and thirsty land like this—in a world where there are so many sorrows arising from sin, and so many difficulties in our way to heaven—we need sources of supply, fountains of consolation. And in the Word of God we have them; "*wells* of salvation," not running streams, not brooks, full in spring and dry in summer, but wells! 1. Christ is the great fountain (John vii. 37, 38). When He was lifted up upon the cross, the fountain of grace that is in Him was opened, and healing streams shall never cease to flow from it, till the last weary pilgrim has reached the abodes of blessedness. Do we thirst for the pardon of sin? (Matt. xii. 31). For the favour and friendship of God? (Matt v. 6). For solid and spiritual happiness? (Isa. lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17). 2. The religion of Christ is a system of consolation and joy; it is the only one that deserves the name; all others work as with unmeaning ceremonies or unfounded expectations. All the parts of Christ's religion, properly understood and personally enjoyed, promote solid comfort and true joy. Its doctrine (Rom. v. 11). Its promises (Ps. xcvii. 11). Its precepts (Ps. cxix. 54). Its prospects (Rom. v. 2; H. E. I., 4161–4163). 3. God is "the God of comfort." Christ is "the consolation of Israel." The Holy Spirit is "the Comforter." How ample are the sources of comfort and joy mentioned in this chapter! (1.) The removal of a sense of divine displeasure (ver. 1). (2.) Hope of interest in God's special favour as our covenant God (ver. 2).

II. What is necessary to our personal appropriation of these comforts and joys (*b*). Many persons, who appear to be disciples of Christ, are without the satisfaction which the text promises. They may be safe, but they are not happy (H. E. I., 306–314). The fault is not in the Gospel: the promise is express, the provision is free, the invitation is open. If the Christian would know the joy of which the text speaks, 1. *He must learn to set a higher value upon spiritual blessings.* It is the order of divine procedure to awaken a high sense of the value of His gifts before He communicates them. Many seem indifferent whether they enjoy the higher blessings of religion or no. The saints in former times were more earnest (Ps. xlii. 1). 2. *He must cultivate those graces of religion which are immediately connected with its enjoyments:* humility of mind, a teachable spirit, a more spiritual order of affections (Ps. xxv. 9, 14; Col. iii. 2; Phil. iv. 5–7). 3. *Especially he must cultivate a prayerful spirit and expectant dependence upon divine illumination.* Prayer is the key that opens the treasury of heaven (Ps. xxxiv. 5, cxix. 18). Neglect of the Spirit's influences is a frequent cause of degeneracy and distress. 4. *He must avoid whatever would hinder the life and power of religion:* the secret love of sin, undue attachment to the world, prevalence of unholy tempers. It is a matter of perfect impossibility that the comforts of religion can be enjoyed where sin and inconsistency prevail. Is there no sin indulged, no self-dependence, no conformity to the world, no neglect of private duties? (Jer. ii. 17, 18). Heaven is the realm of perfect happiness, because it is the realm of perfect holiness. 5. *He must diligently use all the appointed means of grace.*

III. Particular seasons when the prophetic promise is fulfilled. Private meditation, public ordinances, trouble, death, entrance into heaven.—*Samuel Thodey.*

By "the wells of salvation" we may understand "the means of grace" (*c*).

I. *These wells of salvation have been opened for the supply of human needs;* not for God's benefit, but for ours. What wells are to travellers through a desert, these are to us in our pilgrimage to Zion. II. *Men should come to these wells for the purpose of having their needs supplied;* not from habit, not that we

may set a good example, &c., but that we ourselves may be refreshed and strengthened. III. *No frequency in coming to these wells can be in any sense meritorious.* Expose the mistake of the Pharisee and the Ritualist. The oftener we avail ourselves of them, the more we increase, not our claims upon God, but our obligation to Him; and the more should increase, not our pride and self-righteousness, but our thankfulness to God for His goodness in providing them. IV. *The wells are nothing: the water in them is everything.* A dry well, however deep it may be, or whatever historic associations may cluster around it, is worthless; and so are all religious ordinances apart from the Spirit of God. We must ever remember that they are *means* of grace —channels through which the God of all grace will satisfy the soul's thirst of those who seek Him in sincerity and truth. V. *Nevertheless we are not to stay away from the wells, nor despise them.* That is a false spirituality that disparages divine ordinances. We are not to trust in the wells, yet neither are we to refuse to draw water out of them: —(1.) Because GOD opened them, and to neglect them is to charge Him with foolishly providing what we do not need. (2.) Because it pleases Him to give us water through them; and we are to accept the blessing in whatever way He chooses to impart it to us. Naaman (2 Kings v. 11–13); the blind man (John ix. 6, 7). (3.) Because we need refreshment and reinvigoration day by day (Isa. xl. 31; Ps. lxxxiv. 7; H. E. I., 555, 556, 3866–3876). (4.) Because our Master in the days of His flesh used the means of grace; no true Christian will seek in this respect to be above his Lord. VI. *God has opened* WELLS *of salvation;* not one, but many; none needlessly. We must use them all. Their benefit lies in their conjunction. For the production of a harvest, the sun and the rain are both needed; the sun alone would make a desert, the rain alone a swamp. No bird can fly with *one* wing, &c. We must read as well as pray, &c.

CONCLUDING LESSONS. — 1. *Why God sometimes leaves the wells dry.* His people sometimes come so to delight in the means of grace, that they forget they are only *means*, and then He withholds His blessing, that they may be taught that He alone can satisfy their souls (Ps. lxxxiv. 2, lxii. 5). 2. *Why, when there is water in the wells, some are not quickened and refreshed.* (1.) Water revives the living, not the dead. (2.) Some forget to bring their buckets. They have no real desires after God, no true faith in His power and willingness to bless them, and to each of them we may say, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the wells are deep" (John iv. 11).

(α.) Down dropt the breese, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun at noon
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day
We stuck, nor breath, nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

—*Coleridge: "Ancient Mariner."*

(β.) The Talmudists refer the words, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," to the custom of making an oblation of water on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, when a priest fetched water in a golden pitcher from the fountain of Siloah, and poured it mixed with wine on the morning sacrifice as it lay on the altar; while at the evening offering the same was done amidst shouts of joy from the assembled people. It was in obvious allusion to this rite that, "in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink;" but as it is not prescribed in the law of Moses, it has been doubted whether it dates back earlier than the times of the Maccabees. It is, however, at least as probable that the Asmonean princes should have restored an ancient as ordained a new rite: such a rite, to acknowledge God's gift of water without which harvest and vintage must have failed, would always have been a likely accompaniment of the feast in which these were celebrated; and the like acts of

Samuel and Elijah, though for different purposes, perhaps go in confirmation of the ancient existence of such a practice (1 Sam. vii. 6; 1 Kings xviii. 33–35). Be this as it may, the idea conveyed by the image of the living water will be the same:—"Such as is the refreshment of water from the spring, and from the clouds of heaven, to the parched lips and the thirsty land, in this our sultry climate, such shall be the refreshment to your spirit in that day from the salvation of Jehovah. He shall dwell among you, and His Spirit shall be a well of life to the whole nation."—*Strachey.*

The last day of the feast, known as "the Hosanna Rabba" and the "Great Day," found Him, as each day before, doubtless, had done, in the Temple arcades. He had gone thither early, to meet the crowds assembled for morning prayer. It was a day of special rejoicing. A great procession of pilgrims marched seven times round the city, with their lulats [branches of palm woven round with willow and myrtle], music, and loud-voiced choirs preceding, and the air was rent with shouts of Hosanna, in commemoration of the taking of Jericho, the first city in the Holy Land that fell into the hands of their fathers. Other multitudes streamed to the brooks of Shiloah, after the priests and Levites, bearing the golden vessels, with which to draw some of the water. As many as could get near the stream drank of it, amidst loud chanting of the words of Isaiah—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," "With joy shall we draw water from the wells of salvation,"—rising in jubilant chants on every side. The water drawn by the priests was meanwhile borne up to the Temple, amid the boundless excitement of a vast throng. Such a crowd was, apparently, passing at this moment.

Rising, as the throng went by, His Spirit was moved at such honest enthusiasm, yet saddened at the moral decay which mistook a mere ceremony for religion. It was burning autumn weather, when the sun had for months shone in a cloudless sky, and the early rains were longed for as the monsoons in India after the summer heat. Water at all times is a magic word in a sultry climate like Palestine, but at this moment it had a double power. Standing, therefore, to give His words more solemnity, His voice now sounded far and near over the throng, with soft clearness, which arrested all—

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink, for I will give him the living waters of God's heavenly grace, of which the water you have now drawn from Shiloah is only, as your Rabbis tell you, a type. He that believes in Me drinks into his soul of My fulness, as from a fountain, the riches of divine grace and truth. Nor do they bring life to him alone who thus drinks. They become in his own heart, as the whole burden of Scripture tells, a living spring, which shall flow from his lips and life in holy words and deeds, quickening the thirsty around him."—*Geikie.*

(γ.) John vii. 38, "In the Book Sohar we find the same metaphor, fol. 40, col. 4, 'When a man turns to God, he becomes like a spring of fresh living water, and streams flow out from him to all men.'"—*Geikie.*

(δ.) See H. E. I., 315–352, 1252–1285.

(ε.) See H. E. I. 3309–3311, 3424–3465, 5075–5081.

The Duty of Gladness.

xii. 6. *Cry out and shout, &c.*

Two things are here observable:—1. *The person addressed,* "thou inhabitant of Zion" (α), *i.e.*, one who is no longer a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints (Eph. ii. 12, 19). 2. *The admonition given,* "Cry out and shout." Consider—

I. The truth on which the admonition is founded. "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." This includes—1. *His character,* "the Holy One of Israel." The holiness of God has shone forth in all that He has done in heaven and on earth (Ps. cxlv. 17); in heaven it is the theme of the songs of the most exalted intelligences (Isa. vi. 3); on earth it inspires bad men with dread and dislike (Isa. xxx. 11), and good men with thankfulness and hope (Ps. xxx. 4; Heb. xii. 10; H. E. I., 2275, 2843). 2. *His greatness.* "Great"—in duration, wisdom, power, dominion, and resources. All these render Him terrible as an enemy, desirable as a friend (β). 3. *His residence.* "In the midst of thee." But is not God everywhere? Yes, but not everywhere in the same character; not in heaven as in earth, &c. Wherever His presence is spoken of in a way of promise or privilege, it is to be distinguished from His attribute of omnipresence,

for it has then in it something peculiarly beneficial and saving (Deut. iv. 7; Ps. xxxiv. 18). God's presence in the midst of His people is the guarantee of their safety and the source of their joy. Let them adore the condescension He shows in dwelling in their midst.

II. THE STIRRING EXHORTATION. 1. *Religion is animated.* "Cry out and shout," &c. What is here required cannot be merely the exclamation, separate from suitable dispositions and sentiments, as is the case with some. Noise is in itself worth nothing. On the other hand, where there are these feelings, it is permissible, yea, praiseworthy, to give free and exultant expression to them (Rev. v. 12). Some disparage such expressions as enthusiasm, but there is nothing that should call forth enthusiasm like the Gospel. Religion calls for not only feeling and sentiment, but for the highest degree of feeling and sentiment (γ). 2. *Religion, rational as well as animated.* Why is the inhabitant of Zion to cry aloud and shout? "*For* great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." This more than justified him, for from hence the Church can infer *safety, assistance, consolation, honour.* Thus God is with His people, and this is *grace:* soon they shall be with Him, and that is *glory.*—*William Jay: Sunday Evening Sermons and Thursday Evening Lectures,* pp. 297–305.

(α.) Zion was the name of a high mound situated upon a bed of rock enclosed within the walls of Jerusalem, and making the finest and strongest part thereof. Here was first the Tabernacle, and then the Temple, and concerning it great things are declared (Ps. cxxxii. 13–18). If we look through the literal description to the spiritual glory discernible, we shall soon see that it was typical of a higher state, and a shadow of good things to come. I need hardly remind you that, by a figure of speech, Zion is used in the New Testament as significant of the Church of the living God (Heb. xii. 22).—*Jay.*

Such are the encouragements that consoled the ancient city of God in the day of her trouble. Harassed, her garrisons stormed, her armies scattered, her very sanctuary threatened with violation, she was bade remember her Eternal King, and take comfort in the thought of that watchful Guardian who sooner or later would assuredly avenge her wrongs. Often was she taught the same lesson; and often, in despite of her own froward and unbelieving heart, was the prediction realised. The Lord still "loved the gates of Zion;" the streams of His holy "river still made glad the city of God;" and He was "known in her palace for a refuge." But a gloomier hour at length arrived; even Divine patience has its limits; and the last dread crime of Zion could only be expiated in her ruin. Blood had flowed beneath her hands, every drop of which was worth a universe, and she had invoked its curse upon her own head and the head of her children. And now, behold, in the fearful words of her own prophets, "the lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way,"—Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen, because their tongues and their doings are against the Lord to provoke the eyes of His glory. "But what?—is this the city of which such glorious things are spoken—that the Highest Himself should establish her, that she should not be moved?" Where are His mighty promises of perpetuity? Where is that foundation which no power should ever shake—that Zion, in which the poor of His people were to trust?

Brethren, look around you, and you behold the evidences of its existence, and of the eternal faithfulness of Him who is pledged to its immortality. A greater than Zion inherits her name; a greater than Zion bore it in the far-reaching scope of the prophetic vision. That "city of the great King" was but a perishable emblem of a "city whose builder and maker is God." It is true she was honoured by His symbolic presence and sanctified by His sacred worship; it is true that for ages she alone, in a world of darkness, held the precious lamp of His truth; but what are these characters of honour to hers, whose every living stone is quickened by His indwelling energy, whose worship is no more in type and shadow, but in spirit and in substance; whose preaching and teaching, no longer shrouded in obscurity and limited to a corner of the earth, spreads over all lands, embraces the whole family of mankind, and makes even the course of that sun whose "going forth is from the end of the heaven and his circuit unto the ends of it, and from whose light nothing is hid," a faint image of the power with which she diffuses through all nations "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"! (See also 2 Cor. iii. 10, 11.)—*Archer Butler.*

(β.) How well may the Church on Zion rejoice to have such a God dwelling in the midst of it! He is great as the Giver of promises, and great in fulfilling them; great in grace, and great in judgment; great in all His saving acts, which spread from Israel to all mankind.—*Delitzsch.*

(*c*.) Take the Gospel. What is it? Not a decision of Parliament, or the termination of a debate which may have no effect on our welfare. It brings us glad tidings of great joy. It is infinitely important, it is eternally interesting to us. It is our life. It is all our salvation, and it should be all our desire. Therefore we should receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation. We should receive it as a dying man would a remedy, or as a condemned criminal would hail a reprieve. We should receive it with feelings superior to those with which we receive anything else. It is a subject which rises infinitely above all others in interest and importance, and demands all the energies of the soul, and renders Dr. Young's words the words of truth and soberness:—

"On such a theme 'twere impious to be calm;
Passion is reason; transport, temper here."
—*Jay.*

THE DAY OF THE LORD.

xiii. 6. *Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand.*

Sad and unnatural is the condition of those to whom the coming of "the day of the Lord" is a cause for dismay. But this is the condition of the wicked. They can think of God prevailing and asserting Himself only with dread. Dread must take possession of them whenever they think of the future, for the profoundest and most ineradicable instincts of their nature assure them that the "day of the Lord"—a day of judgment and retribution—must come.

Thus far all is plain. But when we read and think about what is to take place on "the day of the Lord" (vers. 7, 8, 15, 16, 18), astonishment takes possession of us, and we feel disposed to call it "the day of the devil." How *can* a day like this be called "the day of the Lord"? Note—1. That all the cruelties here described were inflicted by men. 2. That these men were moved to inflict these cruelties by their own passions; that they acted as free agents, and without any thought of fulfilling a Divine purpose. 3. That the supreme passion by which they were moved was the passion of revenge—of revenge for cruelties equally frightful inflicted by the sufferers of that day. Nothing can exceed in horror the picture which the Babylonians themselves drew of the enormities perpetrated by them on conquered nations. 4. That, consequently, the Babylonians were reaping as they had sown. The day that was coming upon them was a day of retribution, and in this sense emphatically "a day of the Lord." As a matter of fact, retribution is one of the laws under which we live (H. E. I., 4609, 4611, 4612), and it is a Divine law, a law worthy of God. It is an ordinance of mercy, for the tendency of it is to restrain men from sin. By their knowledge of its existence and the certainty of its operation (P. D., 2995), wicked men are undoubtedly greatly restrained from wickedness. Were it not for the days when it is manifestly seen in operation, when great transgressors are overwhelmed with great sufferings, atheism would prevail; a reign of terror and of unrestrained cruelty would begin, and every day would be a day of the devil. 5. This day, with all its horrors, was an essential preliminary to the accomplishment of God's purposes of mercy in regard to His people. For *them* it was emphatically "a day of the Lord," for it was the day of their deliverance from bondage, a day of exultant thanksgiving that the power of their relentless oppressors was for ever broken (chap. xiv. 1–6). In the history of our race there have been many such days, *e.g.*, the French Revolution of 1789, the American Civil War; days when the worst passions of humanity were manifested without restraint; but days when the wisdom of God was displayed in bringing good out of evil, in punishing the iniquities of the past, in ushering in a brighter and better era of freedom and justice.

The record of such "days of the Lord" should be eminently instructive to us. 1. They should teach us the true characters of those statesmen who

use national power for purposes of unrighteous national aggrandisement. They are patriots but traitors, rendering inevitable a bitter harvest of national shame and sorrow. 2. They show the folly of supposing that the great power of any nation justifies it in the hope that it may safely deal unjustly with other and weaker nations. Guilty nations set in operation forces mightier and surer in their operation than any they can command —those forming the instrumentality by which God governs the earth, and in spite of human passions, maintains the existence and carries forward the development of the human race; these, combining, bring on a "day of the Lord," in which, by the overthrow of the haughtiest wrongdoers, His existence and authority, and the folly of the practical atheism to which great nations are prone, are demonstrated (P. D., 2544).

The Doom of the Children of Babylon.

xiii. 16. *Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes.*

Consider this terrible declaration—

I. As it regards man. 1. As a revelation of the degradation of which he is capable. History may be said to be a manifold revelation to this effect; the Bible alone gives hope for man, by disclosing his capabilities of development and exaltation. 2. As a remindal that no earthly empire is in and of itself secure against utter overthrow. 3. As a remindal that what are called national disasters, are made up of sufferings endured by a vast number of individuals.

II. As it regards God. So considered, it should be remembered—1. That His permission of such things is, when viewed comprehensively, only part of the great mystery of the permission of evil. 2. That this is an instance of the working of one of the great natural laws by which God governs the universe—the law of retribution. 3. That in the heart of this terrible prediction there is a bright ray of hope. When you see a surgeon performing a terrible operation on a patient, you are sure that he is confident that the patient will be restored to health. So when we look at the world as it *is*, we are certified that there is a better world *to be*. God would never have permitted the world to be, if He did not see how out of this present misery He could educe eternal and triumphant blessedness. Towards that better future God is leading on the world (H. E. I., 3421–3423). The revulsion of feeling with which we read this prediction is one proof of it; there was a time when such incidents in the prosecution of a war would have been regarded as a matter of course. That it should not be so now marks an advance, and is a prophecy of further advances.

The Love of Money.

xiii. 17. *The Medes . . . shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.*

I. One of the most universal and powerful of all passions is the love of money. Consider—1. How *wide-spread* is this passion. The instant men rise above utter barbarism, it manifests itself. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is one of the first signs that civilisation has begun. In every civilised land, and among all classes, it constantly manifests itself (α). It is one of the inspiring and moulding forces that are always at work. 2. How *powerful* it is in its operation! It drives men to exhausting toil. It leads them to face appalling dangers. It persuades them to endure distressing privations. It betrays them into the basest crimes. Up to a certain point, it may be said to be a useful servant; it works to promote our welfare, by

overbalancing other tendencies that would degrade and ruin us; but when once that limit is overpassed, it transforms itself into a tyrannical master. Like many an Eastern tyrant, it destroys all other lawful passions that might dispute with it the throne (H. E. I., 400, 402).

II But this passion, powerful as it is, may be controlled and conquered. "The Medes . . . shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it." This means, not that they should be exempt from the influence of this worldwide passion, but that in them it would be temporarily overborne by another more powerful passion—the passion for revenge. For years the dominion of Babylon over them had been maintained by the most relentless rigour and frightful cruelties; and when the hour for successful revolt came, the one thought of the Medes would be—*Revenge!* That one intense longing would consume all others; the men on whom it had laid hold would forget their thirst for riches.

This really is only an instance and illustration of what Dr. Chalmers used to call "the expulsive power of a new affection." Many other affections come up to the human heart, and expel avarice; *e.g.*, love of wife or children, ambition, vanity, &c. We see, therefore, that the love of money can be conquered, and as reasonable men always in danger of being overcome by it, we should ask by what passion or principle it can be conquered most nobly. That principle and that passion is the love of Christ. Of those who are truly possessed by it, it may be truly said that they do not regard silver; and as for gold, they do not delight in it. They may have much money, and by their splendid genius for business may be constantly gaining much more; but they possess it, it does not possess them; they are *its* masters. By the use of it they are ennobled. Let us pray that our hearts may be garrisoned by this more powerful and noble passion; then all the assaults of avarice upon them shall be made in vain. We shall meet them as Christ Himself met the offer of all the wealth and glory of the world; and the result will be, that we shall possess the true riches which will be valuable in the eternal world (Matt. iv. 8–10, vi. 19–21).

(a.) In many of those who seem utterly free from the love of money, it is only dormant; like the thirst for blood in that tiger which, captured when a cub, was brought up as a household pet, but showed itself to be a tiger indeed when, licking a slight wound in its master's hand, it first tasted blood. So, many who appear to be utterly free from the love of money are so simply because they have never possessed more than sufficed for their bare necessities. Let them possess more, and avarice will show itself. This is the explanation of the familiar fact, that many who become prosperous become niggardly; they may continue to give, but it is always in a steadily diminishing proportion to their income (H. E. I., 4013; P. D., 3068, 3488).

Spare the Children.

(*Sunday-School Anniversary Sermon.*)

xiii. 18. *Their eye shall not spare children.*

This declaration is made concerning the Medes, by whom the power of Babylon was destined to be broken. So thoroughly bent will they be upon their mission of revenge, that they will not be turned away from it by any appeals either to their avarice (ver. 17) or to their pity (text). The helplessness of infancy and the innocence of youth, which are naturally so impressive and persuasive, will not avail to stay them in their devastating career.

We should display a singular ignorance of the world in which we live, if we were therefore to pronounce the Medes exceptional monsters of iniquity. Alas! there are many imitators of their relentless cruelty. In our own land children are not spared in relation to evils even more terrible than war. Youth is always beset by dan-

gers, even when it is most carefully guarded; but when it is specially under the influence of wicked men, it is often ruthlessly sacrificed. Widespread is the spirit of evil which knows not how to pity it. Examples of its existence and operations are to be found—1. In houses where the most hurtful principles and vicious practices are continually set before children. From their youth up they are not spared from the most disastrous influences (H. E. I., 775–779). 2. In business, where often the most sacred interests of childhood are sacrificed for the sake of gain. Their health, by inflicting upon them excessive labour. Even their morality, by fiends who tempt them into haunts of vice. Compared with these incarnations of diabolical cruelty, the Medes were merciful.

The season of childhood appeals to our concern and should awake our compassion—1. By its *helplessness*. It has to lean upon others. 2. By its *ignorance*. It has had no time to learn (H. E. I., 780). 3. By its *inexperience*. Unless it is aided by the guidance of mature wisdom, it must almost necessarily go astray. 4. *By its peculiar susceptibility to every kind of moral influence*. To these appeals let us give reverent, cheerful, and thoughtful heed. Let us not be content to shudder at this prediction concerning the Medes, or at such historical records as that of the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem (Matt. ii.); let us make the children the objects of our care. 1. Let us spare *our own children*, from all unreasonable demands upon them, from the mischiefs that will inevitably come upon them if we do not carefully train them in the way they should go. 2. Let us spare *the children of the poor* from the evils of ignorance. These evils are terrible and far-reaching. Not to rescue them from these evils when we have the power to do so, is to doom them to them. In the Sunday-school we have a means of rescue which we cannot neglect without sin.

—*William Manning.*

Sodom and Gomorrah.

xiii. 19. *And Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, &c.*

The anticipated destruction of Babylon is here compared to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, because of its completeness, and because of the hopelessness of any return of that city to its former glory (vers. 20–22). The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah should be pondered, not merely because it is here used as a symbol of the fate of Babylon, but also because of the solemn lessons it affords in relation to sin. That memorable overthrow occurred—I. *As a Divine vengeance upon long-continued and unmitigated wickedness* (Gen. xviii. 20, 21). II. *Notwithstanding the influence of a good man in their midst* (2 Pet. ii. 7, 8). A man like Lot, even though he perhaps suffered injury to his own character, could not live among people like the Sodomites without being a witness for better things and a testimony against their crimes. III. *Notwithstanding the fervent intercessions on their behalf of an eminently godly man* (Gen. xviii. 23, &c.). IV. *The overthrow came at last without any suspicion on the part of their guilty inhabitants that their doom was so near* (Prov. xxix. 1).

But why dwell upon a fate so awful, and that occurred so long ago? Because it is a solemn warning to men to-day. Listen to our Saviour's teaching on this point (Matt. xi. 20–24). From this we learn that the fate of those who reject Christ will be more severe even than that which befell those guilty cities—1. Because of clearer light against which they sinned. It cannot be in any way a trivial thing to possess the Gospel (2 Cor. ii. 16). 2. Because of the more abundant opportunities of salvation which were afforded them. 3. Because of the more abundant and excellent examples set before them. 4. Because of the multiplied examples of warning to which they should have given heed.—*William Manning.*

THE JOY OF SALVATION.

XIV. 3, 4. *And it shall come to pass in the day, &c.*

In these verses is described the feeling of relief and joy of Israel in view of release from the Babylonish captivity. So profound will be their sense of God's deliverance and favour, that they will look with contempt even upon the imperious and exacting Babylon, whose glory will be smitten, whose strength will be destroyed.

This is an experience known to men in their spiritual seekings and findings of God. Blessed is that "rest" which follows many a season of sorrow, and fear, and hard bondage wherein men are made to serve. Consider—

I. SOME JOYFUL DELIVERANCES, of which we may be said to have here a type. Every soul engaged in a true search after God can recall such experiences: first there was the "sorrow," then the "joy;" first the "fear," then the confidence; first the "bondage," and then the rescue and the liberty. *E.g.*, 1. *The time of spiritual conversion.* That is often preceded by deep conviction, anguish, and gloom. Alarming are those awakenings whose first mission is to show us our guilt and danger. Then we feel the grievousness of the bondage of sin. It is a time of exile, want, servitude. What a glorious day is that in which the Lord gives us rest from our sorrow and fear, by removing from us the terrors of the law, and leading us into the liberty of the Gospel! This is the deliverance to which our Saviour calls us (Matt. xi. 28). 2. *The light which comes after a period of great mental conflict and doubt respecting Divine things* also illustrates our subject. Honest and reverent doubt, which intercepts a true seeker after God, is no sin. To creatures who have everything to learn, doubt is but a part of the process of learning; all original research, all independent inquiry, has more or less of it. But doubt may become a hard master, a ruthless tyrant; that which comes from mere prying curiosity, idle speculation, empty cavilling, is certain to do so; in this case doubt, instead of being a pathway, becomes a prison (H. E. I., 4867, 4868). But doubt in any case is a source of unhappiness; it should lead, not to scepticism (H. E. I., 4867, 4868; P. D., 910), but to prayer (P. D., 915, 916). Those whose prayers for deliverance from it have been answered, know how blessed is that day when the Lord gives them "rest." 3. *The period of victory which follows a season of severe temptation* is another illustration. In most virtues weak, there are sides of our character specially exposed to assault. The sin which most easily besets us proves our oppressor, our tyrant (H. E. I., 4482-4484, 4497-4499). Recall the conflicts you have often had, how often sin has wellnigh proved fatal to you. What a gracious day was that when the Lord came to your help, and gave you rest from your enemy! 4. *The heavenly life hereafter* will be a still better realisation of the thought before us. To many of God's people the general character of their earthly life is so mysterious, burdensome, and sad, that it *all* seems a bondage to them. To such, death will come as the day of the Lord to give them "rest" (H. E. I., 220, 1623–1628).

II. THE REAL INSIGNIFICANCE OF OUR FOES, which in the day of our deliverance will be made plain to us, and which should be apprehended by our faith even now (ver. 4). 1. Greater is He that is for us than all that can be against us, and therefore, if we be faithful, our victory is sure (1 John iv. 4; Rom. viii. 37; H. E. I., 934, 2368, 2791). 2. By Him even our very foes and oppressors shall be made to help us. In the case of Israel, their masters were to become their servants, their oppressors their subjects (ver. 2). It is so in the spiritual life: our very sorrows, fears, nay, our sins, may be made to serve great ends; a vanquished fear, a

defeated sin, will leave us stronger to meet the next. Let us so live and strive, by the grace of God, that, having triumphed over every evil habit, every ignoble doubt, every besetting sin, we may be able to say at last, "How hath the oppressor ceased!"—*William Manning.*

The Grave and its Mysteries.

xiv. 9–12. *Hell from beneath is moved for thee, &c.*

I. There is an invisible world (H. E. I., 2173–2175). II. Its inhabitants stand in a mysterious relation to this. III. Are conscious of passing events. IV. Despise all earthly distinctions. V. Await the coming of their fellows. VI. Receive them according to their moral character.—*J. Lyth, D.D.: Homiletical Treasury*, part i. p. 20.

The Contrasts of Death.

xiv. 11. *Thy pomp is brought down to the grave.*

We are perpetually reminded of the shortness and uncertainty of life (H. E. I., 1561). But these truths, so elementary, so familiar, so important, and so much forgotten, are most vividly brought before our minds when a prince is laid low. Then we see that only one thing is important, because only one thing is permanent, and that is *character*, by which our whole future is determined. Happy is he, whether peasant or prince, whose is the character of the regenerate, who possesses a good hope through grace; wretched is he, whether slave or monarch, who lives and dies without it. Reflect—

I. On the death of the wicked. Always solemn, but especially so when it is that of a wicked man who was prosperous. Everything succeeded with him; he had everything his heart wished for. But death came; broke up a whole system of being and comforts, without furnishing any equivalent for it; and introduced him to eternal perdition. Death obscures the glory of the prosperous transgressors, robs them of that in which they delighted, reduces their wealth to poverty, their honours to eternal shame, their happiness to eternal misery. What a transition—from the vanities of earth to the realities and retributions of the eternal world! from the flattery of their dependants to the presence of the Judge of all! You who are living only for earthly things, think of these things. (H. E. I., 1567–1569; P. D., 684, 741).

II. The death of the righteous. 1. The hour of terror, of consummate terror, to the wicked, is to the Christian the hour of peace, of hope, of joy. This arises from his union with Christ, the Conqueror of death. What will make a deathbed easy? —A broken league with sin, a good hope through grace, a lively faith in Christ (H. E. I., 1590–1593). 2. The hour that terminates the prosperous worldling's glory, introduces the Christian to an eternal weight of glory (P. D., 669, 694, 757). 3. The hour that brings the sinner to the second death commences the perfectness of the Christian's life (H. E. I., 1595–1600; P. D., 711).—*Samuel Thodey.*

The Conqueror Conquered.

xiv. 11. *Thy pomp is brought down to the grave.*

One of the most effectual means of comforting the Church in times of oppression, is by predicting the downfall of her enemies. Here Babylon is doomed; her monarch, whose conquests had been so far-reaching, whose power had proved so irresistible, is represented as having met with a

mightier than himself; as descending to the abode of the dead; as leaving behind him a body which, instead of being honoured with a royal funeral, has no other covering than the dust and the worms; and as being himself insulted by the astonished mockery of the meanest of those who had preceded him into the invisible world. His removal from the world has been as the cessation of a devastating hurricane, and the whole earth rejoices thereat; it re-echoes with songs of gladness that the dreaded victor has himself been vanquished. Well may the world rejoice that its crowned scourges are not immortal!

I. Let us recall some familiar truths concerning this conqueror of conquerors. 1. *He assaults all ranks and all ages* (H. E. I., 1536. 1537; P. D., 677, 700, 707, 751, 752). The world is an unwalled cemetery. Much of the dust we tread on once lived. What is the history of the world but the history of the reign of death? From Abel to the infant who died a moment ago, death has executed his commission without a single pause; sometimes in quiet forms, dust mingling with its native dust; sometimes on a grander scale, by battles, earthquakes, &c. There are a thousand doors out of life; they all stand open; and through some of them death will lead us all; for, like the Great Being whose servant he is, with him there is "no respect of persons" (α). 2. *He is not arrested in his career from any respect for the plans of men*, however heroic and useful they may be. How powerful man often appears in his collective grandeur, binding the ocean in chains, controlling the elements, numbering the stars, building great cities which look like temples erected to Time and destined to outlast his reign, founding empires, and spreading himself out by commerce and enterprise to distant islands and continents; and he has always still greater projects behind. But while man plans, death receives his commission; the ground sinks beneath him, his power suddenly collapses. Few histories would be more instructive or impressive than that of the unfinished projects of men of might and genius, *e.g.*, Cæsar and his proposed digest of law, Cuvier and his proposed compendium of science (Ps. cxlvi. 4; H. E. I., 3266, 3273). 3. *He determines all character.* Passing to and fro, he finds character everywhere in the course of formation; suddenly he brings the process to an end, and with their character precisely in the state in which he found it, those whom he strikes down go into the eternal world. A certain fact, a solemn consideration this!

II. Let me remind you of the strange insensibility of mankind to the existence and operations of this power, from which none of us can escape, and which may so unexpectedly bring all our plans and purposes to an end. Few men give any practical heed to the fact that they are mortal (H. E. I., 1557–1565; P. D., 69). The conduct of mankind in neglecting the concerns of immortality, reverses all the elements of wisdom. Men bury themselves in the concerns of time, and forget that their consciences will have an awful resurrection in another world. This insensibility is the more unpardonable since God uses so many means to arouse and to instruct us. Reflect on the momentous character of life, its shortness, its grand purpose, its solemn issues; look to the grand vision beyond the shades of death.

III. In order that we may be delivered from this prevalent insensibility, let us recall some of the advantages arising from a frequent contemplation of, and a Scriptural preparation for, the approach of death. 1. *Preparation for death quite changes its aspect.* To a Christian it would be a dreadful thing not to die; his would be the case of a child who was never to come of age, of an exile who was never to go home (H. E. I., 1571–1578; P. D., 667. 669, 747). 2. *Preparation for death exalts the character of life.* It dispels much of the gloom of life; the bright prospect at the end irradiates all the intervening way. 3. *In* preparing for death we become imbued

with the temper and the tastes of heaven (H. E. I., 1566, 2731–2737.)—*Samuel Thodey.*

(a.) When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of parents on a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tombs of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those we must so quickly follow; when I see kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men who divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind; when I read the several dates of some that died as yesterday, and some of six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all be contemporaries and make our appearance together.—*Addison.*

The Seed of Evildoers.

xiv. 20. *The seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.*

I. *This is the verdict of the Scriptures.* They abound in evidence that confirms it. Whatever may be the resources of wicked men, true glory does not lie in their path, and nought they can do will avail to secure honourable memory for their wickedness. On the contrary, their name and deeds will be attended with disaster and covered with shame. And this in spite—1. Of the *wealth* which may be connected with evil-doing (Job xxi. 7–21; Ps. lii. 5–7, &c.); or, 2. The *power* it may have (Ps. lxxiii. 3–8, 18–20), even if it be a confederated power (Prov. xi. 21); or, 3. The *ingenuity* with which it may conduct its work (Ps. xxxvi. 2–4; Micah ii. 1–3). These are but a few of the declarations of the Bible on this subject.

II. *This is also the verdict of human experience.* As a matter of fact, we see that a wicked course of life is regarded as a shame. It is held up as a beacon to be avoided, whilst the career of the good is held up as a model to be followed. History is full of examples of men whose names are held in universal detestation, notwithstanding their connection with ingenuity, wealth, and power. Each of us knows how well the fact is proved by myriads of examples in social life. A persistently wicked course is known to be a blighted one, and any attempt to invest it with glory or renown is felt to be wrong. We recoil even from the thought that it should be possible for such a course to command the homage of men.

III. *This truth gives us great hope for the future of our world.* If it were possible for wrongdoing to gain for itself imperishable renown, we might tremble for the safety of those principles of righteousness and truth which have always been regarded as the main support and stay of good men. Reckless folly and wild presumption would become exalted and enthroned, and we might well shudder at the possibility that, under the attractions of successful wickedness, men would rush in masses and bow down to Evil, declaring it to be their Good. This abandoned idolatry, this deep depravity, is now reached only in isolated cases, and such are regarded even by godless men as deplorable and hopeless. It is a hopeful fact that evildoers have to carry on much of their work in the dark, for it is a sure token that, as the light widens and deepens, the works of darkness must fall; their covering will be removed, and their shelter will be gone.

IV. *This truth is also one of encouragement to every individual Christian in his efforts after a Christ-like life.* Evil-doing does not fail for want of effort; its attempts are bold, its struggles are determined. Yet it is doomed always to wear the name of dishonour and shame; a wicked man will never get glory for his wickedness. But Christian life is in itself true and real honour; its glory is as a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. The Christian is a son of God, and no higher dignity than this is conceivable (H. E. I., 1073–1076);

he is traversing a path which will for ever lead him on to scenes of new splendour and blessedness. Seeing that this is our high calling and destiny, let us neither fear nor envy the seed of evildoers, however strong or secure they may be, but with greater persistency than ever let us "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."—*William Manning.*

This is—1. Matter of observation, 2. The natural effects of bad training and example (H. E. I., 777–779); 3. The judicial appointment of God (H. E. I., 824).—*J. Lyth, D.D.: Homiletical Treasury*, part i. p. 21.

A Memorable Answer.

xiv. 32. *What shall one answer? &c.*

Translators and interpreters differ as to whether the answer in this verse was intended to be given *by* or *to* the messengers of the nations; as to the nations whose messengers are here spoken of; and as to the time when they came on their errand. Adopting the view which represents them as coming to Jerusalem to congratulate Hezekiah after the marvellous deliverance of that city from the Assyrians (chap. xxxvii. 36–38), we remind you—

I. That the wonders of God's love to His Church often surprise strangers as well as friends. For the deliverances wrought for her are often—1. *Surprisingly seasonable, e.g.*, the overthrow of the Egyptian host in the Red Sea, when everything seemed to favour Pharaoh and to be against Israel (Exod. xv. 13–15); the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib. 2. *Astonishing because brought about by unlikely means.* Who could have anticipated the manner of the deliverance of Jerusalem on this occasion? [Give other examples.] 3. *Astonishing because vouchsafed in spite of great provocations and unworthiness.* Every such deliverance is a work of grace as well as of power.

II. In such times of deliverance friends and enemies alike wonder at the secure foundations on which the Church is built. The literal Zion was a marvel of architecture (Ps. xlviii. 13), and in this respect it was a worthy symbol of the Church (α). 1. The strength and stability of the spiritual Zion is guaranteed by the character and resources of the Builder: "*The Lord hath founded Zion.*" 2. Therefore we should not fear the might of any of the adversaries that come up against her (H. E. I., 1246–1251).

III. The stability and security of Zion are sources of delighted satisfaction to the humblest of her inhabitants: "*The poor of His people shall trust in it.*" They know they are under the guardianship of One who is "mighty to save," and who encircles the least as well as the greatest in the arms of His love. Their consciousness of poverty and weakness leads them to rest in Him with an undivided trust, and they thus attain unconsciously to the blessedness of those whose trust is in God only, the peace which rests on the only foundation that cannot be moved.—*Samuel Thodey.*

Mark what the text affirms, "*The Lord hath founded Zion;*" this is the guarantee of His love and of her stability: "*the poor of His people shall trust in it,*" or, as the margin has it, "*shall betake themselves unto it;*" this is the one purpose of her Divine mission upon earth—the care, the teaching, the education, the guidance of the poor.

I. The security of the Church. 1. The strongest, most fundamental title to protection is creation. Even among ourselves no one frames an object in order to destroy it; he who makes, makes that he may preserve. Thus is creation in itself a presumptive title to protection; and it is abundantly plain that the strength of such a bond will ever increase with the cost of the object produced. In

one sense the whole material universe cost its Creator nothing, for its production was to Him a thing of infinite ease; but this cannot be said of the Church. He spoke to bid the one, He died to make the other exist. When He beholds His Church, He sees in it the monument of His own inexpressible sorrows; He feels this offspring of His Divine agonies drawn closer to His eternal heart by the thought of all it cost to give her being. 2. In this Church of His is His own *honour* pledged. He hath not covenanted with the world that now is to immortalise it; but He has passed His own word for the perpetuity of His Church (Matt. xvi. 18; Isa. lx. 20, 21). 3. The Church, in its ultimate perfection, is set forth as the very *reward* of all the sorrows of its Lord. To "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied" is His destined crown; this "joy set before Him" was that which enabled Him to "endure the cross, despising the shame." (See also Eph. v. 25–27.) Shall He be defrauded of His recompense? 4. There is more than creation to bind the Church to Christ, more than promise, more than reward; there is communion, oneness, identification. A man may desert his child; he cannot desert himself. Even though the Redeemer could forget His espoused bride; even though He could deny His plighted promise; yea, though He could abandon His own reward, He cannot abandon His own body (1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. i. 23, v. 30). With such a union there can be no separation; if Christ be immortal, the Church is so; when He dies she shall perish, but not till then.

II. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH. "*The poor of His people shall trust in it.*" The Church of Christ is one vast institute for the benefit of the poor. The poor were the special objects of Christ's solicitude and tenderness, and they have been, and should be, the special objects of the Church's care. Even in her worst days she has had an open hand for the poor. She should ever follow the example of her Lord in caring for their temporal needs. But it is in the doctrine she preaches, and the way she preaches it, that the Church is indeed the poor man's consoler (β).—*William Archer Butler, M.A.: Sermons, Doctrinal and Practical, Second Series*, pp. 227–237.

(α.) See notes to outline: THE DUTY OF GLADNESS, chap. xii. 6.

(β.) It is in meeting his sorrow with tidings of glory to come, in brightening the gloom of his humble home with the hallowed light of eternity, in soothing his days of hard and heavy toil with her peaceful Sabbaths, in watching over his bed of sickness with a patience as unwearied as if his poor chambers were gorgeous with gilded ceilings and silken tapestry; it is in these things that the Church carries on that loveliest attribute of Her Lord, "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress."—*Archer Butler.*

GOD'S OUTCASTS.

xvi. 4. *Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab.*

I. In the most deserted condition of His people, God acknowledges them as His own. "*Mine outcasts.*" Sennacherib thought them his; but though forsaken by all the world, God claims them as His own, and avows His interest in them. Men pursue an opposite course; when individuals sink in the social scale, the kindly warmth of friendship is chilled, and the bond of intercourse broken (H. E. I., 23, 24, 2152–2157; P. D., 1422). But God is the friend who sticketh closer than any brother (α). True, they sometimes esteem themselves outcasts even from Him (Ps. xlii. 2), and still more frequently are thought to be so by the ungodly (Ps. xlii. 3); but in this the ungodly make a mistake which in their case is natural, and God's people should never wrong Him by suspecting Him of fickleness (chap. xlix. 15).

II. God provides a refuge for His people when and where it might be least expected. "*With thee, Moab.*" Moab was not a neutral, but a hostile state, one of Israel's most inveterate foes, always on the outlook for oppor-

tunities to display its hostility. Strange, therefore, that Moab should be selected as a protector for Jehovah's outcasts; strange, but not unexampled. God often raises up friends for His people in unexpected quarters, supplies their needs by unexpected means, or turns their foes into friends (Prov. xvi. 7). Esau's heart was suddenly changed; Joseph found favour in the eyes of the keeper of the prison; Elijah was fed by ravens; the hungry lions forbore to touch Daniel, &c.

III. God would have His people to be only sojourners in Moab. His outcasts were merely to *dwell* there; they were not to be incorporated with the Moabitish nation; they were not to adopt either the social customs or the religious beliefs of that people. In like manner He would have His people remember always that in this world they are only sojourners (1 Pet. ii. 11; H. E. I., 5026–5065).

IV. God is preparing to bring His outcast and scattered people home. He hath prepared for them a city, and He will bring them to the city He hath prepared for them (John xiv. 1). Let them recognise, rejoice in, and live in harmony with this gracious purpose (Phil. iii. 17–21). — *Samuel Thodey.*

(α.) Philip Henry says, "God's people may be an outcast people—cast out from men's love, their synagogue, their country; but God will own His people when men cast them out. They are outcasts, but they are His; and somehow or other He will provide a dwelling for them." He adds, that though many of the ejected ministers were brought very low, had many children, were greatly harassed by persecutors, and their friends were unable to support them, yet in all his acquaintance he never knew, nor had heard of, any Nonconformist minister being in prison for debt.

(β.) "I have long looked for you," said a persecuting magistrate to a poor woman, "and now I commit you to prison; and then what will you do?" "If it please my Heavenly Father," she replied, "I shall be fed at your table;" and so she was, for his own wife, who sat by, sent her daily food (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12).

Fruitless Supplications (α).

xvi. 12. *He shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail.*

In the profoundly affecting picture which the prophet draws of the calamities coming on the Moabites, he represents them as at length, every other means of relief being exhausted, coming with sad and weary hearts to their sanctuary to call upon their god for deliverance. Their supplications were destined to fail, for they were presented to that which had no power to hear or save (Ps. cxv. 4–8). This line in this dark picture reminds us of two facts in the life of the men of our own time, who see clearly the folly of idolatry.

I. In times of sorrow they are often seen in the sanctuary. Many who at other times lead openly irreligious lives are then seen using the forms of devotion. This is natural (H. E. I., 3718); it is not wrong; that which is wrong is the infrequency with which the sanctuary is visited and prayer offered by them (H. E. I., 3878, 3879). It is natural and fitting that in time of trouble men should seek God in the sanctuary, for the sanctuary is the place—1. Of special *promise* (Exod. xx. 24; Deut. xii. 5; 1 Kings ix. 3; Matt. xviii. 20). 2. Of *special means.* Everything there tends to the production and increase of a devotional spirit (H. E. I., 5078). 3. Of *special memory*—of memories of help obtained, of sorrows solaced in former times.

II. But all this makes more remarkable the other fact of which these words may well remind us, that **many of the supplications that are offered in the sanctuary are offered in vain.** We know that this is a fact: how is it to be explained? In such ways as these—1. *Many of the suppliants have little or no faith,* and faith is the essential condition of blessing (H. E. I., 3827–3830). 2. *Many of the suppliants are not really in earnest,* and lukewarmness is an offence to the Divine Being (H. E. I., 3814, 3815, 3831–3838). 3. *Many of the suppliants are not really penitent.* Their prayers are mere calls for help in time of distress, and God

has nowhere promised to help the impenitent and rebellious (H. E. I., 3846, 3858; P. D., 3595).

To point out the causes of the weakness and failure of such prayers is also to point out the remedies that must be applied if the suppliants would have their prayers "prevail."—*William Manning.*

In times of trouble, men—1. Feel their need of help. 2. Generally have recourse to fallacious sources (H. E. I., 172–175). 3. Meet with disappointment, because God is forgotten or unknown.—*J. Lyth, D.D.: Homiletical Treasury*, part i. p. 23.

(a.) See Outlines: WORTHLESS HUSKS, and REASONS FOR THE REJECTION OF PRAYER, chap. i. 15.

DIMINUTIONS AND CHANGES OF LIFE.

xvii. 5–7. *And it shall be as when the harvestman, &c.*

God's visitations of judgment are the subject of the prophet's burdens (ver. 1). So the text. Adversities and sorrows set in. Blessings gone, except a few. "Two or three berries," &c.

I. **The various illustrations of the text.** 1. *In the adverse changes of life.* Many who were rich and prosperous are now poor. All gone, except two or three berries. Some so through their own folly, &c.; others by the allotment of Providence, sickness, &c. (H. E. I., 4403–4406, 4975–4986). 2. *In the failure of bodily health and vigour.* Once strong and robust, &c.; now left but a few berries, &c. 3. *In the bereavements of kindred and friends.* Once a crowd of them — parents, brothers, sisters, children—but they have gone, one after another. 4. *In the powers and capacities for useful activity.* Once active, useful, but now frailty and weakness have superseded. This is distressing to the sensitive, &c. Pushed aside by another generation. 5. It will apply to *times and seasons of probation.* How wise was old Barzillai! (2 Sam. xix. 31). The indications of age, &c. (Eccl. xii. 1). Few years left, &c., or even days.

II. **The uses we should make of the subject.** 1. *It should impress us with the vanity of earthly things.* All fleeting, all retiring; like the seasons, like streams. 2. *The folly of earthly-mindedness.* How extreme! Grasping shadows, resting on the moving wave, building castles in the air, &c. 3. *The necessity of wisely using our opportunities.* For the best ends. Working while it is day—now, while we have light and life. 4. *Seeking a fitness for the world of the future* (Heb. x. 34; xi. 13–16). 5. *Believing and devotional confidence in God.*

Application: — Christ is ever the same. In all His offices, work, and graciousness, He is without a shadow of turning.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.:* 150 *Sketches of Sermons*, pp. 296, 297.

This striking passage depicts the process of God's judgments upon Israel. We may take it as suggestive—

I. **Of the sweeping destructiveness of calamities in human life** (ver. 5). How often has the picture been realised!—1. *In the history of nations.* The process of the depopulation and misery with which Israel was threatened, may be imagined from the view given in chap. iii. 1–8. Modern parallels may easily be found, the wars of the Roses, the plague of London, &c. 2. *In the social calamities of families.* One after another is broken up, one relationship after another is severed, until only an "outmost" branch is left as a remnant. Widow, orphans, friendless. Such are those who remain to tell the tale. 3. *In the physical calamities of individuals.* 4. *In the degradation of the soul through the deceitfulness of sin.* In some extreme cases, what a sad undermining of character and destruction of capacity do we behold.

II. **Of the hopefulness of human life even when it is at its worst** (ver. 6). Though the reaper has made sure

work, yet enough remains to give hope. There is here true gospel, suggesting such thoughts as these:—1. *Begin at the point of your ability, however low it may be.* Every man is rightly expected to make use of whatever power he has. If it is only sight, or only hearing, or only one hand, one talent out of ten, he must use it. The loss of the other nine will not excuse his neglect of the one he has. 2. *Beginning thus low down, yet in earnest, we have the assurance of improvement and progress.* We have abundant illustration of this in the history of the "remnant" that was left in Israel (2 Chron. xxx. 11; xxxiv. 6, 9, &c.). We see here an encouragement for every sinner who will awake, though late, to the true purposes of life. Redemption is the favourite work of God. He is on the side of feeble, struggling men, and delights to encourage and help "the remnant" which is spared (H. E. I., 934–941, 956, 958, 2368, 4790–4792; P. D., 474). The very purpose for which Christ came into the world was to help the struggling, to save the lost. Those who have been brought down to the extremity of need and the verge of despair may find friendship and help in Him (H. E. I., 928, 929).—*William Manning.*

Sanctified Affliction.

xvii. 7, 8. *At that day shall a man look, &c.*

In the prophecies of terror to guilty nations there is always some provision of comfort for God's faithful and penitent people. His prophets were commissioned to minister hope to His friends, while they foretold misery to His enemies. In the text Isaiah, predicting the overthrow of the ten tribes, furnishes consolation to the faithful remnant who had not yielded to the prevalent idolatry (ver. 6), and declares that the judgments he announced would result in the conversion of many who had been ensnared by it. We are thus led to consider *the designs of God in the afflictions of His people.*

I. **To recall their wandering hearts to Himself.** "*At that day shall a man look to his Maker*" (H. E. I., 56–59, 66–70). This is the result of sanctified affliction. Whenever it is seen, it shows that the processes of grace have been combined with the trials of providence, and that the health of the spirit has been restored by the Physician of souls. Otherwise affliction hardens, and the man goes back with greater eagerness to worldliness or iniquity, as the retreating wave presently rolls back upon the beach with greater velocity than before (H. E. I., 223–228). But not so if the healing influence has been sought and found. Then "a man will look to his Maker"—1. With a *suppliant* eye, to find in Him sources of consolation and a rock of defence such as the world cannot furnish (Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2; Jonah ii. 1). 2. With a *penitent* eye (Luke xxii. 62; Zech. xii. 10). 3. With a *confiding* and *believing* eye (chap. viii. 17). 4. With a *rejoicing* eye (Rom. v. 11; Hab. iii. 18).

II. **To raise their estimate of the holiness of the Divine character and the rectitude of the Divine dispensations.** "*Shall have respect unto the Holy One of Israel.*" Sin begins with a diminished sense of God's holiness, and conversion is marked by a renewed impression of it (Ps. li. 4).

III. **To separate them from all sinful and idolatrous dependencies.** "*He shall not look,*" &c. The sin of the ten tribes was idolatry (2 Kings xvii. 16), but here it is foretold that it shall be brought to an end. Those who had been guilty of this folly and this sin would not even *look* at the altars and the images they had fashioned with such care. So God aims by His afflictive providences to separate His people from everything in which they put an exaggerated and unworthy trust (H. E. I., 110, 111).

IV. **To endear the mercy that mingles with the trials.** This appears

—1. In the moderate degree in which God's people are corrected, compared with the final and exterminating judgments which fall upon the wicked. Damascus was to be utterly destroyed (ver. 1), but a remnant was to be left to Israel (ver. 5; see also chap. xxvii. 7–9). God's people always see that He has afflicted them less than they deserve (Lam. iii. 22) (α). 2. In the alleviations of their trials (H. E. I., 117–121). 3. In the triumphant issue of the whole. They are delivered from the idolatry by which they were degraded (H. E. I., 116).—*Samuel Thodey.*

(α.) See Outline: God's Reluctance to Punish, chap. i. 9.

Forgetfulness of God.

xvii. 10, 11. *Because thou hast forgotten, &c.*

I. It is possible to forget the God of our salvation. 1. The majority of men habitually forget Him. He very seldom holds a real and commanding place in the hearts of any of us. We are all prone to have our hearts wholly filled with the cares or pleasures of life. Even if our aims be in themselves lawful, we seldom recognise God in framing or prosecuting them. Hence the shock which the thought of God's nearness gives us in times of calamity, sickness, or expected death. The very shock shows that we are open to the prophet's charge. 2. This forgetfulness of God, to which we are all so prone, should be recognised to be a state of peril and guilt. Who is so near to us as God? who so essential to us? who has so many claims upon our grateful and continued remembrance? To be forgetful of Him is a sin of which we should think with shame.

II. This forgetfulness of God leads to false trusts. The throne of our heart cannot remain vacant; if God be not there, unworthy objects will surely take His place. The "pleasant plants" and foreign shoots (or "strange slips") here represent the pursuit of lust and idolatry, and that fatal reliance on human help which is so often denounced (chap. ii. 22; Jer. xvii. 5). The sin denounced by the prophet has not become obsolete. All round about us are men who have forgotten God, and are seeking and putting their trust in pleasure, pomp, money, or knowledge. There is a pursuit of knowledge, even a "science" falsely so called that deliberately excludes God from its range, and pronounces Him unknowable! These are the things for which men live, to which they devote all they are and have, from which they look for the happiness for which their hearts crave; these are their *gods!* Forgetfulness of God necessarily leads to idolatry in some form or other; desires and tendencies, in themselves right when under right control, become occasions of guilt; God is shifted from the centre of operations, and the trust of men fixes itself inevitably on unworthy objects (H. E. I., 39).

III. These false trusts lead to bitter disappointments. "*The harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.*" At the very time when abundance of fruit was expected, nothing awaits the anxious toiler but disappointment and failure. Mildew, or blight, or drought, or fire has done its deadly work, and nothing is left but rotting masses, heaps of useless and decaying vegetation. What a sad picture! barrenness and dearth where there should be life and plenty! Yet this is a true picture of the fate of many who have persisted in their rejection of God, and in their clinging to false hopes. A life dedicated to fashion, pleasure, money-getting, or worldly ambition, necessarily ends in a reaping-time of blighted hopes, of darkened prospects, of remorse and despair (H. E. I., 246–248, 5021–5025; P. D., 138, 162, 255, 3592). 1. This result of a godless life will be found even in those cases where all the good that was striven after has been realised; the heart is still left unsatisfied (Eccl.

i. 12–ii. 17). 2. "Desperate sorrow" is the natural result of discovering that the time for securing a profitable harvest is gone (Jer. viii. 20; P. D., 2254).

Earnestly consider God's claims upon you; renounce all false trusts; sow for that harvest in which there can be no real disappointment (Gal. vi. 6). Redeem the time that yet remains; to the worst of us a gracious promise is still held out (Mal. iii. 7; Ps. cxvi. 7). —*William Manning.*

The Punishment of the Wicked.

xvii. 12. *Woe to the multitude, &c.*

These verses appear to have no connection with the prophecies that precede or follow them, but they seem to indicate the character and result of the great invasion of Sennacherib. As a description of that event, they are most beautiful and graphic, sufficient to create terror in the most thoughtless and boastful sinners. For they remind them of the ease with which the overthrow of the rebellious is effected when God visits them in the midst of their pride and self-confidence.' In regard to the punishment here depicted, think —I. *Of the striking contrasts which the day of visitation reveals respecting the conduct and the position of the wicked.* Verse 12 shows us the vast and varied host in fancied security; we have a magnificent picture of a state of might, pomp, vainglory, self-confidence; but ere we reach the end of verse 13, we see it scattered! Even while it gloried in its strength, the storm that was to scatter it had already gathered over it. We see the same contrast in everyday life; wicked men secure, strong, boastful—the next moment utterly cast down (Ps. lxxiii. 18–20); or, by the near approach of death, transformed into the subjects of a pitiable despair (P. D., 684). II. Of *the resistless execution of the sentence of doom.* In pursuit of their wicked schemes, sinners are often led to a daring defiance of all who threaten their progress, even of God Himself; *e.g.*, Pharaoh (Exod. v. 2), Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 17, &c.). But how sharp is the rebuke which God administers; with what terrible energy are His decrees executed! The profane boasters become as chaff, as gossamer before the whirlwind (H. E. I., 2298). III. Of *the swiftness with which the sentence of doom is executed* (ver. 14). The morning dawns upon their noise and pomp, but fast as the beams of light does their judgment overtake them; trouble comes at the eventide, and by the next morning they are not (P. D., 3413). It is true that the punishment of the wicked often seems to be delayed (Eccl. viii. 11); but—1. Sin and punishment are inseparable (H. E. I., 4603–4610); and, 2. Whenever the punishment comes it is sudden. Such is the blinding and delusive power of cherished sin that its penalty always finds the sinner unprepared to receive it; it is always a surprise and a shock to him.

1. Nations and armies cannot successfully evade the penalties of their sins; how much less can the individual sinner do so! 2. The certainty of the punishment of all unrepented sin should lead us seriously to reflect upon the attitude we are assuming before God. 3. The subject should lead to repentance, but not to despair (Ps. cxxx. 7; John iii. 16, 17).—*William Manning.*

An Altar and a Saviour for Egypt.

xix. 18–20. *In that day shall five cities, &c.*

I. God is able to raise up monuments and trophies of His grace in the most unlikely places (vers. 18, 19). For the historical fulfilments of these predictions, see the ordinary commentaries. They should teach us not to

despair of the progress of religion in the most unlikely *places*, the most unlikely *times*, among the most unlikely *persons*. The grace of God is able to subdue the hardest hearts, to enlighten the darkest minds, to convert the most guilty natures, to cast out Satan where his power seems strongest and his interest most secure. Despair not of your own salvation (H. E. I., 2376), of the salvation of those dear to you, of the final triumph of the cause of truth (H. E. I., 979, 1166–1168). But recollect that all that has been done has been done by the use of appropriate means: the altar to God in Egypt was built by human hands, the Ark was not built by miracle but by means; all the triumphs we anticipate are to be achieved by the diffusion of Divine truth, by the prayers and efforts of the Church. What effort are *you* making?

II. God often overrules the trials of life to produce a spirit of prayer, and to bring men to Himself. "*They shall cry unto the Lord because of their oppressors* (α).

III. It is God's prerogative to raise up a Saviour (ver. 20). Whatever comforts or deliverances you have had through the medium of creatures, the hand of God is to be pre-eminently acknowledged in them all. Spiritually we need a great Saviour, and God has provided one equal to the emergency of the case. Our guilt is very great, our danger very threatening, our enemies very powerful, our ruin very awful, but help is laid on One that is mighty. The greatness of Christ as a Saviour appears from the essential dignity of His nature (Heb. i. 1), from the certain efficacy of His atonement (Heb. vii. 25), from the countless number of the redeemed (Rev. vii. 9), from the completeness of the salvation He imparts (1 Cor. i. 30).—*Samuel Thodey.*

(α.) See Outline: SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION, chap. xvii. 7, 8.

CHASTISEMENT.

xix. 22. *And the Lord shall smite Egypt, &c.*

I. The benevolent design of God in chastisement. God smites in order to heal. Scripture teaches throughout that God's dealings with men are—1. *Not capricious.* 2. *Not indiscriminate.* 3. *Not unjust.* He does not impose burdens that cannot be borne, nor exact obedience which man cannot render, nor select favourites for preference or victims for vengeance, without any regard to the relations existing between man and Himself. Contrary to all this, God's smiting is that—(1) of a *Rescuer*, who inflicts blows upon our chains that He may set us free; (2) of a *Physician*, who in mercy probes the wound that He may heal it; (3) of a *Father*, who uses the rod for the salutary purposes of correction and reformation (H. E. I., 56–74).

II. The conduct befitting in men when under chastisement. "*And they shall return*," &c. This return includes —1. *Submission* (H. E. I., 143). 2. *Entreaty for help.* (See also ver. 20.) This involves humble confession of sin, and hearty reliance upon God (H. E. I., 145–147). 3. *Sincerity of purpose*, as manifested in the fulfilment of vows. (See also verse 21.)—*William Manning.*

THE BURDEN OF DUMAH.

xxi. 11, 12. *The burden of Dumah, &c.*

There are three distinct prophecies in this chapter, and they are all termed *burdens*, as denoting heavy judgments. The first respects Babylon; the next, *Dumah*, Idumea, or Edom, inhabiting Mount Seir; and the last, Arabia.

The fall of Babylon by the Medes and Persians is announced under the form of a *watchman* stationed to discover approaching objects, with orders to declare what he saw (vers. 6–9). It was an event peculiarly interesting to Judah. Babylon was the floor on which Judah was to be threshed, till the refuse should be separated from the grain. The event which destroyed the one delivered the other (ver. 10).

The fall of Babylon was interesting to other nations as well as Judah; particularly to the Idumeans or Edomites, who were reduced to servitude within a few years after the taking

of Jerusalem. Now, seeing that Judah had received a favourable report, Edom must needs inquire of the watchman (like Pharaoh's baker) of Joseph, after he had announced good tidings to the butler, whether there was nothing equally favourable to them. [We are not to understand, however, that messengers were really sent out of Edom to Isaiah; the process was merely a pneumatical one.—*Delitzsch.*] The answer is, NOTHING; but, on the contrary, the lot of Judah's enemies, "a burden."

The revolution would indeed, for a time, excite the joy of the conquered nations (chap. xiv. 7, 8); but the Edomites should meet with a disappointment. To them a change of government should only be a change of masters. The fair morning of their hopes should issue in a long and dark night of despondency. In the day of Babylon's fall, according to the prayer of the captives, when every prisoner was lifting up his head in hope, Edom was *remembered*, as excepted from an act of grace, on account of his singular atrocities (Ps. cxxxvii. 7–9).

The Edomites were very impatient under the Babylonish yoke, and very importunate in their inquiries after deliverance; reiterating the question, "What of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" When will this dark and long captivity be ended? And now that their hopes are repulsed by the watchman's answer, they are exceedingly unwilling to relinquish them. Loth to depart with an answer so ungrateful, they linger, and *inquire* again and again, in hopes that the sentence may be reversed. But they are told that all their lingering is in vain. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come" again; yet shall your answer be the same.

And what was the crime of the Edomites that should draw down upon them this heavy *burden*, this irresistible doom? *Their inveterate hatred of the people of God* (Obad. 10). Perhaps there was no nation whose treatment of Israel was so invariably spiteful, and whose enmity was accompanied with such aggravating circumstances. They were descended from Abraham and Isaac, and were treated by Israel, at the time they came out of Egypt, as brethren; but as they then returned evil for good (Num. xx. 14–21), so it was ever afterwards. Their conduct, on the melancholy occasion of Jerusalem being taken by the Chaldeans, was infamous (Obad. 10–16).

The passage affords a tremendous lesson to ungodly sinners, and *especially to those who, having descended from pious parents, and possessed religious advantages, are, notwithstanding, distinguished by their enmity to true religion.* The situation of the Edomites rendered it impossible for them to be so ignorant as other heathen nations of the God of Israel; and their hatred appears to have been proportioned to their knowledge. Such is the character of great numbers in the religious world. They have both seen and hated the truth. The consequence will be, if grace prevent not, they will flatter themselves awhile with vain hopes; but, ere they are aware, their morning will be changed into an endless night.

Edom was once addressed in the language of kindness and brotherly affection; *but having turned a deaf ear to this, all their inquiries after deliverance are now utterly disregarded.* Such will be the end of sinners. "When once the Judge hath risen up and shut the door," they may begin to knock, may inquire and return, and come again, but all will be in vain; a night of ever-during darkness must be their portion.

The passage also, taken in its connection, holds up to us *the different situation of the friends and enemies of God under public calamities.* It is natural in such circumstances for all to inquire, "What of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" Each, also, may experience a portion of successive *light* and *darkness* in his lot. But the grand difference lies in *the issue of things.* God's people were thrashed on the floor of Babylon; and, when purified, were presently restored. To them there arose light in darkness. Weeping continued for a night, but joy came in the morning. Not so with Edom; their night came last. Such will be the portion of God's enemies: they may wish for changes, in hope of their circumstances being bettered; but the principal thing wanting is a change in themselves. While strangers to this, the oracles of Heaven prophesy no good concerning them. A morning may come, but the night cometh also.—*Andrew Fuller: Complete Works*, pp. 514, 515.

The whole Bible has, as its common and pervading argument, one mighty subject, which, appearing in a thousand different forms, is substantially the same in every page of the sacred volume. That subject is, the salvation appointed for the chosen of mankind, and the ruin decreed for those who reject the offer. Therefore when the prophetic Scriptures publish to us promises of peace and denunciations of woe, let us never deem that the Divine Spirit had no *ulterior* purpose in these predictions. Let us never cast aside the volume and cry that we are not Edom, or Egypt, or Babylon, or Tyre; and that, therefore, we have nothing to do either with their crimes or their punishment. Let us not vainly dream that the mighty machinery of the prophetic messages was put into play merely to call down curses on a few of the temporary dynasties of this perishable world! "All Scripture was written for *our* use," and these "springing and germinant prophecies" (as they have been called) have a significancy beyond the revolutions of petty kingdoms. They represent, in majestic order and manifest type, the great truths of eternal salvation and eternal ruin; they exhibit, in the sensible language of exterior imagery, what the great Teacher of after-times gave in the higher language of spiritual truth. If the laws of God be uniform and unchangeable, we are justified in reading by this light from *heaven* the prophetic declarations of the course and principles of His earthly providences.

With such views as these elevating our thoughts beyond the details of perished em-

pires into the mightier truths of the eternal empire of our God, let us reflect briefly upon the words before us.

The prophet appears to introduce himself as addressed in scorn by the people of the land which he is commissioned to warn. "Watchman, what of the night?" What new report of woe hast thou to unroll, who hast placed thyself as an authorised observer and censurer of our doings? But the prophetical watchman—the calm commissioner of Heaven—replies, adopting their own language, "Yes, the morning (the true morning of hope and peace) cometh, and also the night (the real and terrible night of God's vengeance); if ye will (if ye are in genuine earnest to inquire), inquire! Return, come." Obtain the knowledge you seek, the knowledge of the way of life; and, acting upon this knowledge, repent and return to the Lord your God.

Regard, then, the guilty Edom that is warned; and the office and answer of the watchman who warns it.

I cannot now undertake to count over the array of those who address the spiritual watchmen of the Church of Christ in tones of derision, and mock their ministry. Some there are who ask the report of "the night" with utter carelessness as to the reply; some there are who ask it in contempt.

But what is still the duty of him who holds the momentous position of watchman in the city of God? On the occasion before us, remark—1. He did not turn away from the question, in whatever spirit it was asked. 2. He uttered with equal assurance a threat and a promise. 3. He pressed the necessity of care in the study, and earnest inquiry after the nature, of the truth; and he summed up all in an anxious, a cordial, and reiterated invitation to repentance and reconciliation with an offended but pardoning God. Thus, the single verse might be regarded as an abstract of the duties of the ministerial office.—*W. Archer Butler: Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 339–345.

Night and Morning.

xxi. 11, 12. *Watchman, what of the night?*

That there is night in this world few will question. He must be a bold optimist who thinks everything as it is, is for the best possible in the best possible of worlds. Darkness still covers the earth. God's children, who have a glorious light within them, have a dark night all round about them. Night is the symbol of gloom and suffering; and it is the season of sin. It is moral night, because "men love darkness rather than light." Every true-hearted, earnest Christian is a watchman: he watches for his own soul, and for the souls of others; and he longs for the advent of the world's new morning, when the shadows shall flee away. Regarding the earnest Christian as the person accosted in the text, what are his thoughts and fears about the night? What are his hopes about the morning?

I. *When the Christian looks out upon the world, he sees himself surrounded by the night of unbelief and irreligion, and yet he beholds streaks of sunny dawn.* There are many things at which if he looked exclusively he would despair—materialism taught by popular teachers, atheism the creed of not a few, abounding luxury, sensuality defiling and degrading all classes of the community. But, looking beyond these, he sees evidences of Christian faith and hope such as the world never before witnessed—Sunday-schools, tract societies, home and foreign missions, various organisations for Christian labour, generously supported and efficiently maintained; and, as he looks, he feels that the morning draweth nigh.

II. *When the Christian man looks into his own heart, he sees much that speaks of the night, but much also that tells of the coming morning.*

III. *The Christless man, as well as the Christian, may well ask, "What of the night?"* He may relieve the gloom of his existence by a few sparks of transient merriment, but soon they will be all extinguished; and for him there will be no morning!—*W. M. Statham: Christian World Pulpit*, iii. 193.

Passing from the historical application of this oracle, we observe that it may be taken as setting forth the spirit of inquiry first raised in the soul by the hand of God, the form that inquiry will take, the answer it will receive, and the direction in which it will find ultimate satisfaction.

I. **Thoughts on the spirit of religious inquiry.** The picture before us

is that of a walled city; the middle watch of the night, when the citizens are asleep. But one anxious spirit cannot sleep; he turns out into the dark, silent, deserted street, oppressed by a strange feeling that something is going to happen. He hears the heavy footfall of the watchman pacing to and fro on the city walls. With eagerness not to be repressed, he cries, "Watchman," &c. This is symbolical; it has its counterparts in our own time. 1. *This restless inquirer is the exception.* The many sleep, only one wakes and inquires. The danger is common, but only one feels any apprehension of it. There are multitudes of sinners, few inquirers concerning the way of salvation. 2. *The spirit of inquiry appears in an unexpected quarter.* A man of Seir, an Edomite, lifts up eager questions; the men of Israel sleep. The old, old story. Many lepers in Israel: Naaman cleansed; ten healed, the Samaritan only returns to give thanks. The boldest ventures of faith were made by the Gentile centurion and the Syro-Phœnician woman. Those who pressed into the kingdom were not Scribes and Pharisees, but publicans and sinners. So it is still. 3. *The inquiry was well directed.* The appeal was not to the citizens who were asleep, but to the watchman who was awake. If you have questions to ask, ask of the man of quick perception, keen sensibility, high standing, broad and firm basis of hope in Christ. Not necessarily of the minister, but of the man who is spiritually wide-awake; he is the true watchman. 4. *The inquiry was weighty.* What of the night? Is it far spent? When will the day dawn? What of the foe? Are they quiet in their camp? Or are they endeavouring to surprise and capture the city? We have all cause to put questions of corresponding importance. 5. *This inquiry was earnest.* In some cases the inquiry is listless, is only a matter of compliment; or it is entered upon reluctantly, as an unpleasant duty. But this man is in earnest. He calls again and again. He *will* be heard; it is a matter of moment to him. He does not know what is about to happen; the watchman should know—placed high, outlook wide, senses trained. The inquirer will not submit to be disregarded. Oh, for more of this earnestness.

II. **Thoughts on the answer.** 1. *The answer comes through the watchman.* Human lips start inquiries, and through human lips the answer comes. One heart is filled with fear; another heart filled with faith must be its helper. Let those to whom the answer has been entrusted give it promptly, clearly, joyfully. 2. *The answer declares God's methods with men.* God has two great methods: one has its image in the *morning*, the other in the *night*. Let *morning* set forth compassion, tender mercy, loving gifts; *night*, judgment, awful anger, heavy inflictions. If the morning be neglected or resisted, then the night will certainly fall upon you. Note the order in which these methods are employed. *Morning*, fresh, clear, dewy, bracing, beautiful, comes first. So in the history of the world, of the Church, of the individual. First the morning of youth! prize it highly, use it wisely. Upon the sinner comes first the morning of mercy, of invitation, of entreaty and promise. Alas that he should despise and neglect it! 2. But the *night* comes afterwards! True, the night of death comes to all, but there is an infinite distance between death *in* Christ and death *out of* Christ. He who dies *in* Christ, passes into the eternal day; he who dies *out of* Christ, is cast into "the outer darkness!"

"Inquire"—seek to know the way of salvation. "*Return*"—as the prodigal from the far country. "*Come*"—blessed word! "Come" penitently, believingly, NOW!—*J. R. Wood.*

"Night" is suggestive of anxious, perplexed, critical states; *e.g.*, travellers in the desert, voyagers on the ocean, sufferers in the sick-chamber. Very naturally do we transfer such thoughts as these to our spiritual experiences (Ps. cxxx. 1, 8). Our text may be taken as suggestive of the World's Cry and the World's Hope in all ages.

I. THE WORLD'S CRY. "*What of the night?*" This is—1. *The cry of a soul awakened to its guilt.* The very purpose of conviction is to show the sinner his wandering, downward, benighted state. Hence the terror which first views of guilt usually cause. The flash which in the midnight hour shows the traveller the path of safety, also shows him the dreadful precipice which yawns at his feet. When the sinner is aroused from his sinful career, he is bewildered by the many voices of hope and fear, of warning and promise, which greet his ear; he is oppressed with anxiety to know how such a night of danger and heart-searching will end. 2. *The cry of a soul struggling with its doubts.* The night of mystery often burdens the hearts of true believers, as Job and David found when they struggled with the great problems of life. Life is a new thing to each of us, and many of the same problems perplex us still: *e.g.*, the existence of moral evil, the infinite goodness of God, the truth of Divine revelation. These sometimes press upon us with unusual weight, and shroud us in thick darkness. 3. *The cry of the Church in its hours of anxiety and peril.* These have been frequent, and have been due to many causes: *e.g.*, persecution from without, indifference within, general ungodliness and unholy living, tides of scepticism. The watchmen of the Church have to keep an earnest and anxious vigil when such nights as these settle upon her. 4. *The cry of humanity itself.* There are times when not merely a few men are oppressed by the burdens of their time, but when men in the mass become awake to them. The world betrays its keen sense of disease by the strong remedies it employs. Against wide-spread ignorance, it opposes vast educational schemes; for deep-rooted vices, it contrives various measures of reformation; under a sense of the terrible ravages of the war-spirit, it yearns for international peace. Nations, as well as individuals, have trying experiences of the terrors of social and moral night.

II. THE WORLD'S HOPE. "*The morning cometh.*" In the midst of all the world's darkness we may cherish this blessed hope (H. E. I., 3421–3423). But whence is it derived? Solely from the fact that God in Christ is reconciling the world unto Himself. It is along the track of Divine revelation that we look for the bright rays of the morning. There is hope for our race because of what Christ is—the Revealer of God, the Saviour of sinners, the Head of the Church, the Restorer of humanity. The way, then, to help on the dawning of that day we all long to see, is to live *in* Him, to live *for* Him. Life derived from Him, and spent for Him, will be truly blessed in itself, and will be a means of blessing others.—*William Manning.*

THE GRIEVOUSNESS OF WAR.

xxi. 15. *The grievousness of war.*

In our quiet sanctuary, so full of holy and peaceful memories, let us think about war; the more deeply we do so, the more will the aptness of the phrase which forms our text become apparent to us.

I. The grievousness of war is seen in its causes. War is grievous in its origin and in all the things that foster it. It has its origin in the unholy lusts and pitiful mistakes of mankind (Jas. iv. 1). These lusts and mistakes, what are they? 1. The lust for increased possessions and for power (P. D., 143, 150). 2. The false glory with which war has been invested. To steal and kill on a small scale is infamous, but to do so on a huge scale is heroic! The wholesale butcher surrounds himself with pomp and pageantry that dazzle the eye and enslave the mind (P. D., 3470, 3476). 3. Blindness to the real fields on which true courage and heroism are manifested. The Christian courage which can meet and overcome the as-

saults of wickedness, which can turn aside the edge of scorn, and hurl back the weapons of temptation; that can urge men through living martyrdoms which do not keep time to music or song, which carries Moffat into South Africa, &c.,—this is too ethereal for most men to discern or admire. They have no suspicion of the moral victories that might be theirs on the fields of humble service and self-sacrifice. 4. Insensibility to the worth of human souls. A suspicion of the value of life would unnerve the warrior for his task; he could not then, as he does now, regard men as mere food for powder.

II. The grievousness of war is seen in its effects. These are twofold:—1. *Physical.* "The grievousness of war" cannot be exaggerated, if we look at it from this point of view alone. Think—(1) of the physical and mental suffering that is caused by it (P. D., 3468, 3469, 3472, 3476); (2) of the far-reaching and crushing desolation caused by it (P.D., 3466); (3) of the frightful cost of preparation for war; of the armed truce in which the nations of Europe live. 2. *Moral.* These are still more terrible. (1.) War brutalises those actually engaged in it (P. D., 3464). (2.) War makes criminals by producing a state of want. (3.) War aggravates national animosities, and leaves to unborn generations a legacy of hatred. Every war sows the seeds of future conflict. (4.) War and preparation for war check the progress of those agencies by which the misery of our race would be abated, and its happiness indefinitely increased. The cause of education, of missions, of the Gospel, languishes under the blight of the war-spirit. The cost of a very few wars would evangelise the world (P. D., 3476).

Let this meditation move us to action. 1. Let us exert our utmost influence to bring it to pass that national power shall be wielded by men who love peace. 2. Let us encourage everything that tends to facilitate international intercourse (P. D., 3461). 3. Let us on every possible occasion exalt moral qualities above mere physical daring (P. D., 1798, 1801–1803). 4. Let us put forth every effort to diffuse the principles of Christianity. The Gospel is the only true and effectual peacemaker; only in Christ will men ever be lastingly reconciled to each other.—*William Manning.*

The Irresistibleness of God's Judgments.

xxii. 18. *He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country.*

Such was the prophet's message to a haughty statesman who prided himself on his power. Learn from it—1. The ease with which God effects His judgments. There are many things we wish to do which require great preparations and extensive machinery; but to toss a ball from the hand is an easy matter, mere child's play. He who takes up the isles as a very little thing, performs all His works with an ease which cannot be baffled or disturbed. 2. The utter uselessness of any resistance to the Divine judgments. As surely as a ball must follow the line of projection, so surely must we go whither the judgments of God carry us when His set time to visit us is come (H. E. I., 2269, 4960). 3. The awfulness of falling into the hands of the living God.—*William Manning.*

The Glory of the Messiah.

xxii. 24. *And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house—*

As on the nails or spikes fixed in the walls of the ancient temples and palaces it was customary to hang suits of armour, shields, helmets, swords, &c., that had been taken in war as spoils of victory, or that had been used by illustrious ancestors. The declaration is made concerning Eli-

akim, and the meaning of it is, that all his relatives would connect with him all they deemed illustrious, and would rest upon him as their common support. Some of the expressions used concerning him are appropriated by our Redeemer to Himself (comp. ver. 22 and Rev. iii. 7); and, without adopting the view that Eliakim was a type of Christ, we may say that, true as this declaration was concerning Eliakim, it is still more eminently true of Him to whom "the key of David" belongs by right. Upon *Him* they shall hang all the glory of His Father's house."

I. THE GLORY THAT IS PLACED UPON CHRIST. Applying the text to Christ, the phrase "His father's house" acquires a new and more glorious significance, even that of the Church of the living God, the one family in heaven and on earth. All the glory of that spiritual and eternal house depends upon and is justly ascribed to Christ. 1. *All the glory of purchasing the Church.* All the persons of whom it is composed were in circumstances of bondage and misery, yea, under sentence of death, from which He ransomed them at inconceivable cost (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). 2. *All the glory of redeeming the Church.* This is not a mere repetition of what has just been said. We are the subjects of a twofold redemption—a redemption of price and a redemption of power. From the penalties of sin Christ redeemed us by His blood; from the power of sin, by His Spirit. A supremely difficult and an eternally glorious task is that which He thus undertook and has accomplished. 3. *All the glory of preserving the Church.* What a marvellous history of dangers and deliverances it has had! 4. *All the glory of perfecting the Church.* It shall be complete in number, complete and resplendent with every spiritual grace. Remember what marvellous symbols are employed to set forth the beauty and the preciousness of its component parts, what treasures of spiritual wisdom and grace are already included in it. Hereafter, when it shall stand in all its radiance, the wonder and the admiration of all heavenly intelligences, all the glory of it shall hang upon Christ.

II. THE PERSONS WHO UNITE IN PLACING THIS GLORY ON CHRIST. "*They* shall hang," &c. The penitent sinner hangs upon Christ all the glory of his hope of acceptance with God. 2. The justified believer hangs upon Him all the glory of the favoured position in which he stands. 3. The spiritual veteran hangs upon Him all the glory of His triumphs. 4. The dying Christian hangs upon Him all the glory of the calmness and courage with which he advances to the final victory. 5. The glorified Church hangs upon Him all the glory of its perfected salvation. 6. Angels and archangels, though they were not the subjects of redemption, join in the song of salvation (Rev. v. 11–13), and ascribe to Him all the splendour in which they shine. 7. GOD exalted Him to the right hand of power, and gave Him a Name above every name (Phil. ii. 9–11).

"Oh that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all!"

—George Smith, D.D.

GLORIFYING GOD IN THE FIRES.

xxiv. 15. *Glorify ye the Lord in the fires.*

We are required to honour God, not only in all we do (1 Cor. x. 31), but in all we suffer (*text*). Consider—

I. THE STATE HERE SUPPOSED. "*In the fires.*" Fire and water are both Scriptural figures of affliction (Ps. lxvi. 12; Isa. xliii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 12). Stripped of metaphor, the passage before us supposes a state of suffering. In this state we may be found—1. As *men* (Job v. 6, 7; H. E. I., 47–51); 2. As *Christians* (Ps. xxxiv. 19). This may seem strange to the natural man, who concludes that the favourite of Heaven is entitled to every indulgence upon earth; and it has proved a

source of temptation to the people of God themselves, who have been led from their sufferings to suspect their safety. But this inference is unscriptural (Heb. ii. 10; Isa. liii. 10; Matt. x. 25; Heb. xii. 6; H. E. I., 189–196). Could we view many of those who are infinitely dear to God, we should find them in a state of affliction, often exceedingly trying; and we should see them there, not hardening themselves by infidel reasonings or stoical apathy; not endeavouring to banish all sense of their sorrows by repairing to the dissipations of the world; but waiting humbly upon God (Ps. lxi. 1, 2; H. E. I., 157, 158). This is well; but it is not enough to *seek* God in our afflictions, we must *serve* Him. Consider, then—

II. THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED. "*Glorify*," *&c.* We cannot add to God's essential glory, but we can declare it; we can make it more fully and widely known (Ps. xix. 1). This is the duty to which we are at all times called (1 Pet. ii. 9). We discharge it in affliction, when we verbally and practically acknowledge—1. God's *agency*, recognising that our trial has not come upon us by accident, but by His appointment or permission (Job ii. 10; H. E. I., 143; P. D., 92, 99). 2. His *rectitude* (Ps. cxlv. 17; Dan. ix. 7; Ps. cxix. 75). 3. His *wisdom*, which regulates His corrections and every circumstance connected with them. He never errs in the time, the place, the kind, the instrument, the continuance of affliction; it is precisely the very thing we need, and nothing could be altered without injury (H. E. I., 179–188). 4. His *goodness*, in sending the affliction at all (H. E. I., 162–165), and in the alleviations and compensations by which it is accompanied (H. E. I., 117–121). A grateful mind will never overlook these. 5. His *power*, to support us in the affliction, and in due season to deliver us from it. All the records of Scripture should minister to our faith in His ability to help and deliver; He is unchangeable; He is as near you as He was to His people of old; and you are as dear to Him as they were (H. E. I., 198–202).

III. REASONS FOR DISCHARGING THIS DUTY. We ought to glorify God in the fires—1. Because *it is our duty to honour Him at all times, and affliction cannot possibly exempt us from it.* Though He has permitted affliction to come upon us, He still remains our Creator, our Preserver, our Benefactor, our Redeemer, and as such is entitled to the homage of our heart and life. 2. Because *affliction furnishes one of the finest opportunities* for honouring God (H. E. I., 3692–3694). 3. *Hope should animate us*, because it is distinctly declared that those who honour God shall be honoured by Him.

As the consequence of sanctifying God in the fires, one of two things is certain: either they will be removed, for when the end is answered the dispensation will cease; or you will be compensated for their continuance, by increasing either the present internal supports of grace, or the future recompense of glory, or in both these ways combined.

But can we, who are so weak, perform a duty so hard? No, *you* cannot do it; but the grace of God will be sufficient even for this. View your difficulties in connection with your supplies, God's commands in connection with His promises, and boldly face them all (Phil. iv. 12, 13).—*William Jay: Works*, vol. xii. pp. 159–169.

Glorify God—1. In the fires of persecution by resolute adherence to the truth; 2. In the fires of temptation by a firm resistance to evil; 3. In the fires of affliction by patient submission to His will.—*George Smith, D.D.*

THE GRAND APPROPRIATION.

xxv. 1. *O Lord, Thou art my God.*

I. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN GOD AND OURSELVES. 1. The Lord is our God in a necessary and absolute sense. 2. He should be our God by choice (H. E. I., 306, 307, 2381, 2385, 4630–4647, 4970). 3. If He is thus

to become our God, it must be through the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the exercise of an appropriating faith (H. E. I., 1952).

II. THE ADVANTAGES WE MAY ANTICIPATE FROM THIS CONNECTION. 1. Light in darkness. 2. Guidance in perplexity. 3. Protection in danger. 4. Strength in duty. 5. Consolation in sorrow. 6. Sanctity and glory.

III. THE DUTIES ARISING OUT OF THIS CONNECTION. 1. We should exalt Him. 2. We should be jealous for His honour. 3. We must obey His commands. 4. We should acquiesce in His will. 5. We should seek our pleasure and satisfaction from Him.—*John Corbin.*

THE GOSPEL FEAST.

XXV. 6–8. *And in this mountain, &c.*

The blessings of the Gospel are, with wise adaptation to our views and feelings, often compared to the objects in which men naturally take most delight; and here, as in other places, they are compared to a costly entertainment bestowed by the Sovereign of the universe on the children of His love. It was the custom of Oriental monarchs on great occasions to make rich feasts on a scale of magnificence, of which we in the West can form scarcely any idea (Esther i. 3–7) (α.) At these entertainments wise men were often assembled, and important questions in morals and literature were discussed: hence the benefits of knowledge and wisdom were often exhibited under the image of a great feast (Prov. ix. 1–5). The prophet, as our Lord Himself afterwards (Matt. xxii. 1–3.; Luke xiv. 16–24), speaks in accordance with the habits of thinking common in his time, when he sets forth the blessings of the Gospel under the image of a great feast.

I. A BANQUET OF GRACE AND SALVATION SPREAD FOR THE NEEDY (ver. 6). 1. *It is a feast worthy of its Founder* (Esther i. 7). He who studies it most closely, will be most struck by the vastness of the resources and the magnificence of the generosity of Him who spread it. 2. *It is eminently a feast of reconciliation and restored friendship.* The feasts of the ancients were often connected with sacrificial rites, were employed to confirm covenants, and to celebrate the reconciliation of those who had been estranged and at enmity with each other. We have an interesting illustration of all this in what we are told of Jacob and Laban (Gen. xxxi. 43–55). When Joseph was about to reveal himself in love to his brethren, and to unite them all in a new bond of peace, he made a feast for them (Gen. xliii. 31–34). So did the father of the prodigal, to testify the perfectness of his reconciliation to his guilty but penitent child (Luke xv. 23). The feast of which our text speaks, is a feast founded upon a sacrifice; it is a feast of reconciliation effected by means of sacrifice; it is the sublime and glorious realisation of the ancient symbol of the feast that followed upon the presentation of the peace-offering (Lev. vii. 11–16). It is the fact that it is a feast of reconciliation that gives sweetness and preciousness to all the sweet and precious things of which it is composed, just as it was the fact that they symbolised his restoration to his place in his father's home and heart that made the ring, and the robe, and all the choice viands before him, delightful to the pardoned prodigal (chap. xii. 1; Rom. v. 1, 2, 11). 3. *Its magnificence and its delightfulness are heightened by the number of those who partake of it.* The rich provisions of the Gospel are as widely spread as they are widely needed. This is a joy to the Christian, for to a noble mind happiness multiplied is happiness heightened.

II. ILLUMINATION FOR THE IGNORANT (ver. 7). There was a symbolical fulfilment of this prophecy in the hour of our Saviour's death (Matt. xxvii. 51); that which had hidden the

Holy of Holies from the sight of men was rent in twain. A spiritual fulfilment of it is the need of the world and of each individual: by a veil of ignorance and prejudice men are hindered from beholding the truths which it would be to their highest interest to see clearly. This is declared concerning the Jews (2 Cor. iii. 15), but it is just as true of the majority of the Gentiles: they also see no desirableness in Christ, no preciousness in the salvation He offers them. But this destructive veil has been taken away from the hearts of millions, and shall yet be removed from the heart of a vaster multitude—by the diffusion of God's Word, the preaching of the Gospel, and the accompanying agency of the Holy Spirit. The preliminary fulfilment of this prophecy at the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 5, 41) shall have still more glorious counterparts in the not distant future.

III. CONSOLATION FOR THE SORROWING AND LIFE FOR THE DYING (ver. 8).

. . . . . .

This glorious prophecy is in the course of fulfilment all around us; but to us individually it may be as if God had not been faithful to His word. We may have no appetite for spiritual enjoyments, no craving for spiritual blessings (Col. ii. 18, 19). In this case, so far as we are concerned, this feast will have been spread in vain (Luke xiv. 18). If any man is conscious that for him the Gospel has no attractions, if he can listen to this prophecy without a glow of thankful joy, let him cry mightily to God for that new heart without which all that God's wonderful compassion has moved Him to do for our race will leave him still unblessed (H. E. I., 4090).—*Samuel Thodey.*

This beautiful passage may be taken as presenting some of the principal aspects of the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon the earth. It expresses in a most lively manner the feelings of hope and joy which the Gospel is naturally fitted to call forth, and it unfolds the Saviour's work to us under the ideas of a *feast*, a *revelation*, and a *victory*.

I. The Gospel speaks to men of a feast. It assumes that they are spiritually destitute, in actual danger of perishing, and it tells them of a feast. 1. A feast *provided for all* (ver. 6). Christ came not for the exclusive benefit of Jew or Gentile; He came for *man* (Luke xix. 10). He invites all to share in the blessings He has provided (Luke xiv. 16), and declares that that invitation will not be given in vain (Matt. viii. 11). 2. *A feast of the best things.* Suggested here by the richness and flavour of wines long preserved. We are apt to miss the truth that the blessings which the Gospel offers are of the richest quality and of the highest value conceivable; we act as if it required us to give up a certain good for a doubtful and visionary one. This accounts for the eagerness with which men seek first "the world," regarding "the kingdom of God" as something to be made room for after all else has been obtained (H. E. I., 5006, 5007).

II. The Gospel is a revelation to men of God's gracious purposes (ver. 7). A thing may be a mystery to us in two ways: because it is beyond all human comprehension; or, because though it is comprehensible a veil rests upon it. In the former case the mystery must ever remain what it is; in the latter, the covering has only to be removed, and the mystery is at an end. The morning dispels the mystery of the night. So the Gospel discloses eternal truths of which man had no suspicion (Eph. iii. 2–12). The central, supreme revelation of the Gospel is Christ; and this is so because in Him God, who had dwelt in thick darkness, stands manifestly before us (John xiv. 9; 1 Tim. iii. 16.; H. E. I., 855–857, 2241–2243). In Him, too, man is for the first time disclosed to himself; for the first time he catches a glimpse of his nature, of his relation to God, of his glorious possibilities.

III. The Gospel speaks to man of an eternal victory. "*He will swallow up death in victory;*" or, "He shall utterly destroy death for ever." Here

we have suggested to us the crowning work of Christ (2 Tim. i. 10; Heb. ii. 14). In Him the believer has the promise and pledge of a final and glorious triumph. 1. *How great, then, should be our confidence even in the midst of the deepest affliction!* Doubts, fears, temptations threaten to destroy us; but with Christ strengthening us, our conflict leads to certain victory. He who has conquered will make us "more than conquerors." 2. *With what assurance, therefore, should we approach the hour of death itself!* By Him who leads us on, death has been vanquished and captured. Hence death is one of our possessions (1 Cor. iii. 21–23). Death, as in the old time men thought of it, no longer exists; for the Christian it is swallowed up in victory (H. E. I., 1611–1614).—*William Manning.*

The parable of the Great Supper (Matt. xxii. 1–14) illustrates this prophecy. Consider—

I. **The Founder of this feast**: "the Lord of hosts." *Hosts*—all creatures in the universe, rational and irrational; subject to His inspection; under His control; designed for His glory. What think you of the Founder of this feast? What feast ever had such a Founder? It is a feast worthy of its Founder. How wonderful that He should condescend to provide a feast for the world!

II. **The nature of the feast.** Not only the best, but the best of the best; bountiful supply; rich variety.

III. **The persons for whom this feast has been prepared.** All may partake of it; only those are excluded who exclude themselves. 1. Are you making excuses? Will your excuses stand the test of the day of judgment? You must partake, or perish! Delay not; for, as far as you are concerned, the feast will soon be over. Not now too late; "yet there is room." 2. Are you participants? What present blessings; what future glories! Bless the Founder's Name. Seek to bring others to the feast.—*Henry Creswell.*

I. THE AUTHOR OF THIS FEAST. Not a prodigal, squandering the fruits of the industry of others. Not a conqueror, satiating admirers with spoils unjustly acquired. Not a pompous Ahasuerus, whose only design is to set forth his own grandeur. God, moved with compassion for rebels against His authority, spreads a rich feast that they may not perish.

II. THE SITE OF THIS FEAST. "*In this mountain.*" It is in the everlasting Gospel this entertainment is prepared. In coming to Christ for the pardon of our sins and the salvation of our souls, we come "unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." The figure of a "mountain" denotes the *elevation*, *security*, and *publicity* of the Gospel feast. 1. Its *elevation.* In coming to it, we leave all that is debasing behind. 2. Its *security.* In coming to it, we reach a place where we may rejoice without fear (Luke ii. 71–75). 3. Its *publicity.* It is our own fault if we do not see it and reach it.

III. THE RICHNESS OF THIS ENTERTAINMENT. "*A feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow.*" Carnal images that set forth spiritual truths. In the Gospel, and in the Gospel alone, is found that which satisfies the hunger of the soul and fills it with delight.

IV. THE GLADNESS OF THE ENTERTAINMENT. "*A feast of wines on the lees, of wines on the lees well refined.*" A figure founded on the influence of wine on the human system (Ps. civ. 15). The Gospel, when rightly understood and cordially embraced, makes a heavy heart light. What can raise men's spirits so high, or make them so truly cheerful, as a sense that all their sins are forgiven them? The joy of a literal "feast of wines" is transient, and after the midnight revel come days of unpleasant reflection, reproach, and melancholy. But the joy of the Gospel is pure and permanent.

V. THE EXTENSIVENESS OF THE ENTERTAINMENT. It is "unto all people." Other entertainments may be confined to the rich, the great, and the noble; here all such distinctions are done away. Christianity is a universal religion, designed to redeem and gladden the whole world. Its invita-

tions are extended to all (Prov. ix. 1–5; Rev xxii. 17).—*William Reeve, M.A., Miscellaneous Discourses* (pp. 229–237).

I. THE FEAST. The blessings of the Gospel are compared—1. To "fat things full of marrow." What are they? Complete justification, adoption, the sustaining confidence of being an object of God's everlasting love—a love which had no beginning and shall have no end, union with Christ (and all that great truth implies), the doctrine of resurrection and everlasting life. These are a few of the "fat things full of marrow" which the King of kings has set before His guests. 2. To "wines on the lees well refined"—symbols of the joys of the Gospel; such as a sense of perfect peace with God, the sense of security, communion with God, the pleasures of hope, of hope that falls far short of the reality. The description of the wines—"wines on the lees well refined"—reminds us that the joys of the believer are ancient in their origin (β), that they are most excellent in their flavour and aroma, and that they are pure and elevating in their nature. The joys of grace are not fantastical emotions, or transient flashes of meteoric excitement; they are based on substantial truth, are reasonable, fit and proper, and make men like angels (H. E. I., 1082, 3052, 3053).

II. THE BANQUETING HALL. "*In this mountain.*" There is a reference here to three things, the same symbol bearing three interpretations:—1. The mountain on which Jerusalem is built. On a little knoll of that mountain—Calvary—that great transaction was fulfilled which made to all nations a great feast. 2. The Church. Frequently Jerusalem is used as a symbol of the Church of God, and it is within the pale of the Church that the great feast is made unto all nations. 3. The Church of God exalted to the latter-day glory. Then shall the glory of the Gospel be unveiled more clearly and enjoyed more fully than at present.

III. THE HOST OF THE FEAST. "*The Lord of hosts.*" 1. The Lord makes it, and makes it all. It is utterly improper for us to bring anything of our own to it; the Lord provides even the wedding-garment in which we are to sit at it, and no other will be allowed. 2. Only the Lord of hosts could have provided what man needed. But He has done it, and done it effectually. 3. As the Lord of hosts has provided the feast, it is not to be despised. To despise it will show our folly, and involve us in great guilt. 4. As He has provided all the feast, let Him have all the glory.

IV. THE GUESTS. "*For all people.*" For all, irrespective of national, social, intellectual, or even moral differences. The declaration, "for all people," gives hope for all who wish to come. Between the covers of the Bible there is no mention of one person who may not come, no description of one person who may not trust in Christ. To him who trusts Christ the whole feast is open, there is not a blessing of which he may not partake.—*C. H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 846.

(α.) Alexander gave a feast after his return from India of five days' continuance, when ninety marriages were celebrated and nine thousand guests assembled. Diodorus Siculus describes the festivities with which Antisthenes, a rich citizen of Agrigentum (B.C. 414), celebrated the marriage of his daughter: all the citizens of Agrigentum were entertained at his expense on tables laid for them at their own doors, besides a great number of strangers. The festivities, as in the parable of the Ten Virgins, took place in the evening, and the whole city was one blaze of light. The Roman and Egyptian banquets were proverbial for their costliness and splendour. In Persia still, royal banquets are prolonged for many weeks; and a Chinese emperor used frequently to make a feast that lasted a hundred and twenty days.—*Thodey.*

(β.) *Old* wines are intended by "wines well refined;" they have stood long on the lees, have drawn out all the virtue from them, and have been cleared of all the coarser material. In the East, wine will be improved by keeping even more than the wines of the West! and even so the mercies of God are the sweeter to our meditations because of their antiquity. From old eternity, or ever the earth was, the covenant engagements of everlasting love ha been resting like wines on the lees, and day they bring to us the utmost riches the attributes of God.—*Spurgeon.*

The Triumphs of Christ.

xxv. 8. *He will swallow up death in victory, &c.*

It is important at the very outset that we should clearly recognise the Person and the dignity of the Person of whom all these things are declared. Otherwise it will be impossible for us to look for the fulfilment of these marvellous promises. We have the authority of St. Paul for declaring that the Person is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. To HIM he ascribes the victory over death (1 Cor. xv. 54). Thus St. Paul authorises the most exalted conceptions we can form of the dignity of our Lord; for the work which he declares will be fulfilled by Christ is in our text ascribed to Jehovah: "The Lord God will wipe away," &c. It is of "the Lord of hosts" that Isaiah speaks throughout (vers. 6–8). Thus we have here one of the invaluable incidental proofs with which Scripture abounds of the deity of our Lord. If He is "the Lord of hosts," *then* we can believe all the things here declared of Him.

I. **The deliverance of Christ's people from death.** "He will swallow up death in victory"—as the rods of the magicians were swallowed up by the rod of Aaron; as the hosts of Pharaoh were swallowed up by the waters of the Red Sea; as the darkness of the night is swallowed up in the brightness of the morning. True, God's people must depart hence, like other people; but in regard to them Christ "has swallowed up death in victory." 1. By imparting to them a spiritual life and blessedness which are not touched by the dissolution of the union of body and soul. 2. By sustaining and comforting them while that mysterious process is being accomplished. How often has the deathbed of the believer been a scene of triumph! 3. By utterly changing the character of death in regard to them. To them it is not a curse but a blessing (H. E. I., 1571–1594, 1594–1643). 4. By the promises which on the morning of the resurrection He will surely fulfil. "THEN," &c. (1 Cor. xv. 54; H. E. I., 4334–4354).

II. **The deliverance of Christ's people from sorrow.** "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces,"—tears of sorrow for sin; of mourning under affliction, trials, and bereavements; of grief caused by the wickedness of men and the injury done to the cause of truth and righteousness: all shall be wiped away, every cause of sorrow brought to an end.

III. **The deliverance of Christ's people from the shame and contempt of the world.**—*Samuel Thodey.*

A Sorrowless World.

xxv. 8. *And the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.*

The vision presented is that of a sorrowless world; a vision which has haunted the imagination of man in every age. The Bible declares that that which has been merely a bright but disappointing dream shall be a glorious fact.

I. **Look at sorrow as a fact.** How early we become acquainted with it. How our experience of it increases with every year of life. How numerous are it sources. How inevitable it is (H. E. I., 47–50). But the profoundest, heaviest, most oppressive, and most enduring sorrow of which we are capable is the sorrow of the soul which is caused by consciousness of guilt. Unlike all other sorrows, in the thought of death it finds no relief; by that thought it is unspeakably aggravated (H. E. I., 1334–1341; P. Q., 1664, 1668).

II. **Proceed to look at God removing sorrow.** "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." How great the enterprise! Yet how sufficient, though unexpected and startling, is the agency He employs: on this mission of mercy He has sent His own

Son. God, as His manner is, works from within outwards; He not only wipes off all tears, He removes their cause. That cause is sin. But how does He destroy sin in the human soul? 1. By revealing it, by showing its essential hideousness—one of the revelations of the cross of Christ. It is not until we perceive the costliness of the atonement of sin, that we begin to suspect its terribleness and hatefulness. 2. By showing that sin can be conquered. This is the glorious message and proclamation of the life of the Man Christ Jesus. 3. By furnishing a motive that shall stimulate us to the conflict with sin which will end in victory. That motive is found in the love for Christ which springs up in the soul when we view Him dying on the cross in our stead. 4. In the same marvellous spectacle we see that which alone can pacify conscience, and which does pacify it. Believing, our fears and our sorrows flee away; our mourning is turned into joy. The supreme need of the soul is met in reconciliation with God. A sorrowless life is begun. But that is not all. Having destroyed —*in* destroying sin in the soul, God implants righteousness (chap. xxxii. 17). He creates as well as destroys. He introduces into our thoughts, words, actions, a Divine order, and therefore a Divine beauty and blessedness. All sorrow springs from infractions of this order; this is seen in national, social, individual life. In proportion as it is restored, tears are wiped away. The great Agent by whom this work is accomplished is His own Spirit; but He works by means, and the chief instruments He employs are those who, in various ways, are promoting the knowledge and practice of the will of God in the world. In this work we may share; this possibility is the glory of our life. By the progress of Christian truth, how many tears have been already wiped away! In spite of every obstacle, the glorious work shall proceed, with ever-accelerating rapidity, with ever-accumulating triumphs. There is a better day dawning for our race (H. E. I., 3421–3423). Nothing can bring it in but the Gospel. All other agencies —commerce, education, literature, art, legislation—have been tried and have failed. He who loves humanity will consecrate himself to the furtherance of the Gospel; and he who does so shall share in that joy of redeeming the world from sin and sorrow by the hope of which Christ was sustained amid the sufferings He endured for this great end.—*Thomas Neave.*

Advent Thoughts and Joys.

xxv. 9. *And it shall be said in that day,* &c.

Isaiah is here, as he is so often, the prophet not merely of future events, but of future states of mind and feeling; not merely of God's dealings with His people, but of the way in which they would or should meet their God.

To what event does he refer?

1. First of all, to the deliverance of Hezekiah and his people from King Sennacherib (α). That deliverance was recognised as God's work. The recognition of God's presence in the great turning-points of human history is in all ages natural to religious minds. He is with men and nations at all times, but in the great crises of history that presence is brought more vividly before the imagination. So was it when a great storm destroyed the Spanish Armada, and when the power of the first Napoleon was broken first at Leipsic and then at Waterloo. Devout minds felt that these were reappearances of God in human history, and they rejoiced in Him.

2. But beyond the immediate present, Isaiah sees, it may be indistinctly, into a distant future. The judgment of his time foreshadowed some universal judgment upon all the enemies of mankind, some deliverance final, universal, at the end of time. For that judgment and deliverance the Church, both on earth and in heaven

waits and prays (Ps. lxxiv. 10, 22, 23; Rev. vi. 9, 10). To them the answer seems to be long delayed; but it will come (Rev. vi. 12–17); and when at last it bursts upon the world, it will be welcomed by the servants of God as was the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army.

3. But between the days of Hezekiah and the final judgment there is another event closer to the prophet's thought—the appearance of the great Deliverer in the midst of human history. All that belongs to the nearer history of Judah melts away in the prophet's vision into that greater future which belongs to the King Messiah. The Assyrians themselves are replaced in his thoughts by the greater enemies of humanity; the city of David and Mount Zion become the spiritual city of God, the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the Church of the Divine Redeemer. Here, as so often, the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, with its vast and incalculable consequences to the world of souls, is the keynote of Isaiah's deepest thought, and in our text he epitomises the heart-song of Christendom, which ascends day by day to the throne of the Redeemer. (1.) "*Lo, this is our God.*" Christ is not for us Christians merely or chiefly the preacher or herald of a religion of which another being, distinct from Himself, is its object. The Gospel creed does not run thus, "There is no God but God, and Christ is His prophet." When He appears to the soul of man at the crisis of its penitence, or its conversion, the greeting which meets and befits Him is not, "Lo, this is a good man sent from God to teach some high and forgotten moral truths;" no, but "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him; He will save us!" (H. E. I., 835–845). (2.) So might the Jews, the children of the prophets, have sung; so did some of those who entered most deeply into the meaning of the promises given to their fathers (Luke i. 46–55, 68–79; ii. 29–32). (3.) So might the noble philosophers of Greece have sung; so they did sing when, in Christ the incarnate God, of whom they had dreamed and for whom they had sought, was revealed to them. (4.) So have sung in all ages that multitude of human souls whom a profound sense of moral need has brought to the feet of the Redeemer (H. E. I., 948–971).—*H. P. Liddon, M.A.: Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii. pp. 1–3.

I. WHAT ARE THOSE COMINGS OF CHRIST WHICH ARE THE OCCASION OF JOY TO THE CHURCH? 1. *His coming in the flesh*, His incarnation. To this His people had looked forward; in it they rejoiced. Good cause had they for gladness, for He came to spread the gospel feast, to remove the clouds of ignorance and error, to destroy the reign of sin and death. 2. *His coming in the Spirit*, at the day of Pentecost; in the experience of the individual soul, in the hours of penitence, of temptation, of sorrow. His coming in the flesh was the great promise of the Old Testament; His coming in the Spirit is the great promise of the New. 3. *His coming to receive the soul to glory.* He comes unchanged. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. 4. *His coming to bring the present dispensation to a close.* It may be heralded by many alarming and distressing events, but it will be itself a cause for joy. To the wicked it will be a day of unmixed terror, but to the righteous of gladness; for it will bring them redemption from the power of every sin, from the assault of every enemy; every fetter will be broken, every cloud dispelled.

II. WHAT IS REQUISITE TO ENABLE US TO WELCOME THE APPROACH OF CHRIST? 1. A knowledge of Him as our God and Redeemer. 2. An experience of the benefits of His salvation. 3. Love for Him. 4. Submission to His will and zeal for His glory. —*Samuel Thodey.*

I. In the day of judgment nothing will inspire us with joy and confidence but a real interest in Jesus Christ. The ungodly now possess many sources

of present enjoyment; but in that day they will have ceased for ever. One grand, all-important idea will then fill the mind: "The solemn day of account is come; how shall I abide it? How shall I endure the presence of the heart-searching Judge?" But whence can this assurance be obtained? Only from an interest in Jesus Christ. Those who do not possess it will then be filled with shame and terror; but, amid all its terrors, those who do possess it will be enabled to rejoice.

II. **In that day none will be found to have a real interest in Christ, nor capable of rejoicing, but those who are now waiting for His coming.** This is a characteristic of all genuine Christians (1 Thess. i. 10; Tit. ii. 13; 1 Cor. i. 7; Luke xii. 36). Hence, in our text, we find the saints representing their conduct towards the Lord in the days of their flesh by the same term: "We have waited for Him." It may be useful, then, to point out some of the particulars implied in this general description of the Christian character. To "wait for Christ" implies—1. A FIRM BELIEF IN HIS SECOND COMING, and of the infinitely momentous consequences which will follow that event. The true Christian walks "by faith, not by sight." Unlike the profane (2 Pet. iii. 4), he lays it down in his mind as an infallible truth that "the day of the Lord *will* come." 2. A CONSTANT ENDEAVOUR TO BE PREPARED FOR IT. How the wise virgins acted (Matt. xxv. 4). 3. A PATIENT CONTINUANCE IN WELL-DOING (Luke xii. 35–46). Are you *thus* "waiting" for the second coming of your Lord?—*Edward Cooper: Practical and Familiar Sermons*, vol. iv. pp. 225–240.

The chapter from which these words are taken contains a noble description of the glory and the grace of God, of His glory in ruling irresistibly the nations of the earth, and in crushing the enemies of His Church, of His glory and grace in the salvation of mankind. It records by anticipation the triumphs of the Gospel, the downfall of the powers of darkness, the annihilation of death itself, the reign of perpetual peace and joy.

I. **A recognition of the birth of the Messiah.** It is a matter of historical certainty that the people of God did wait for the coming of the Saviour from the time of the very first promise given to the woman after the fall, to the period of our Lord's appearance upon the earth, at which season there was a general expectation in all the neighbouring regions of the advent of some mighty personage who was to realise all the sublime descriptions of the ancient prophets. Anna the prophetess, Joseph of Arimithea, the aged Simeon and other devout men, were waiting for the "consolation of Israel."

II. **An assertion of His divinity.** "This is our God,"—not merely a prophet, a priest, a king, chosen by Jehovah from among His people, and commissioned to give laws and statutes, as Moses was, or to assert Jehovah's authority and punish idolatry, as Elijah was, or to denounce His wrath against an apostate people and at the same time to foreshadow a great deliverance to come, as Isaiah was himself, or Jeremiah, or any other of those holy men who spake in old times by the Holy Ghost; but this is OUR GOD, this is Emmanuel—God with us—God manifest in the flesh.

III. **A declaration of His atoning Work.** How vast that work He took on Himself to execute,—the reconciliation in His own person of sinful man to an offended God, the overthrow of the kingdom of Satan, and the abolition of death! No man could have performed it (Ps. xlix. 7). Could any of the angels, then, have taken in hand this enterprise? Beyond the power, above the conception of any being of limited goodness, knowledge, and power, it could only be accomplished by the Divine Son of God. It was God's work, devised and executed by Omnipotence.

IV. **A recognition of the second coming of Christ.** We are admonished by the Church that there is a

Second Coming of Christ, for which the Church is waiting, and for which we, with every member of the Church, ought to be looking with earnest and anxious expectation. Is our language, "How long, O Lord?" Our answer is, How long the final triumph of the Saviour may be deferred, how long a period may elapse before the world is ripe for judgment, is one of those secrets which God has reserved to Himself (Acts i. 7). The end of all things, if it be not, in the literal sense of the word, at hand, is every year and every day and every moment drawing nearer to each of us. We are all in silent but unceasing movement towards the judgment-hall of Christ. In this point of view, the moment of our death may be regarded as placing us at once before His awful tribunal, for the space between the two, as it affects our eternal destination, will be to us as nothing. When the judgment is set, the books opened, we shall suddenly stand before the Judge, precisely in that state of preparation in which we were found at the moment of our departure out of life. Those who have lived as children of God, as servants of Jesus Christ, under the solemn, yet not fearful, expectation of that day, will then be able to lift up their heads and raise the song of joyful recognition.

Application.—If ever there was a great practical truth, this is one. If we do not wait for the great day of the Lord in such a spirit of carefulness and circumspection as to refer to it all our actions, words, and thoughts, then it is perfectly certain that we shall be surprised at its coming and be taken utterly unprepared. It will come on us as a thief in the night, and we shall sink into everlasting perdition; not for the want of means and opportunities of being saved, but for want of common prudence and forethought in the most momentous of all concerns. What, then, is the conclusion? Live like men that are waiting for their Lord, that when He arrives, He may be welcomed. Accustom yourselves to His presence, in His sanctuary, at His table, in His word, in secret communings with Him in the temple of a purified heart. So when this solemn day shall have come the glad response may be, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him; He will come and save us!"—*C. J. Blomfield, D.D.*

(a.) It was no ordinary day that saw the discomfiture of the Assyrian host before the walls of Jerusalem. We can scarcely understand the terror and dismay with which a religious Jew must have watched the growth of those mighty Oriental despotisms which, rising one after the other in the valley of the Euphrates and of the Tigris, aspired to nothing less than the conquest of the known world. The victory of a conqueror like Sennacherib meant the extinction of national life and of personal liberty in the conquered people; it meant often enough violent transportation from their homes, separation from their families, with all the degrading and penal accompaniments of complete subjugation. It meant this to the conquered pagan cities; for Jerusalem it meant this and more. The knowledge and worship of God maintained by institutions of God, by institutions of Divine appointment, maintained only in that little corner of the wide world, were linked on to the fortunes of the Jewish state, and in the victory of Sennacherib would be involved not merely political humiliation, but religious darkness. When, then, his armies advanced across the continent again and again, making of a city a heap, and of a fenced city a ruin, and at last appeared before Jerusalem, when the blast of the terrible men was as a storm against the wall, there was natural dismay in every religious and patriotic soul. It seemed as though a veil or covering, like that which was spread over the holy things in the Jewish ritual, was being spread more and more completely over all nations at each step of the Assyrian monarch's advance, and in those hours of darkness all true-hearted men in Jerusalem waited for God. He had delivered them from the Egyptian slavery; He had given them the realm of David and Solomon. He who had done so much for them would not desert them now. In His own way He would rebuke this insolent enemy of His truth and His people, and this passionate longing for His intervention quickened the eye and welled the heart of Jerusalem when at last it came. The destruction of Sennacherib's host was one of those supreme moments in the history of a people which can never be lived over again by posterity. The sense of deliverance was proportioned to the agony which had preceded it. To Isaiah and his contemporaries it seemed as though a canopy of thick darkness was lifted from the face of the world, as though the recollections of slaughter and of death were entirely swallowed up in the absorbing sense of deliverance, as though the

tears of the city had been wiped away and the rebuke of God's people was taken from earth, and therefore from the heart of Israel there burst forth a welcome proportioned to the anxious longing that had preceded it: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him; He will save us."—*Liddon.*

The Protecting Hand.

xxv. 10. *For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest.*

"Rest!" As a father's hand on the head of his first-born, blessing and protecting his child. That mountain is impregnable which rests under the shadow of God's hand.

I. Of every enterprise we should ask, "Is it right?" If wickedness be in "the mountain," God's protecting hand will not rest upon it. A just cause creates a good conscience, and hence inspires strength. It is only the just man who feels that God "teaches his hands to war and his fingers to fight, so that a bow of steel is broken by his arms." "The righteous is bold as a lion." The good man can patiently wait and confidently expect God's blessing (James v. 7).

II. Material force allied with injustice will eventually become weak as straw, vile as a dung-heap. The strong places of Moab had no inherent lastingness, because built in a godless spirit (Ps. cxxvii. 1).

III. Forts and castles, ironclads and armies, can never save an unrighteous nation from decay. National selfishness, oppressive enterprises, weaken the strongest defences, corrupt the richest treasures. Babylon became a marsh, Nineveh a forsaken mound, Tyre a deserted rock. In the colloseum at Rome where martyrs bled, the fox, the bat, and the owl now make their home. The walls of Moab were levelled with the dust. By justice only can peoples be strong. If God be in the city, its walls will be lasting as the hills.—*William Parkes.*

Days of Deliverance.

xxvi. 1–2. *In that day shall this song be sung, &c.*

There are days in the history of God's people when they specially need His interposing power. This is their prayer (Ps. xxx. 10). This their glad confession (Ps. xc. 17). At such seasons of direct deliverance the natural expression of the heart is one of gladness. If the poetic faculty be strong within them, as in the case of the king of Israel, they sing in lyric splendour, as in Psalm xviii.

1. *That historic period referred to by the prophet Isaiah in this chapter was such a day.* They had been marvellously protected from the invading Assyrian. His host had been smitten as by the blast of the Lord. When from the city walls they saw the thin relics of that grand army hasten away, then would this song of salvation be echoed through the city. When under the imperial protection of Cyrus the exiles returned to their own land, that was another day of deliverance. They rebuilt the temple and renewed the temple service. Then they sang in their own land, the land of Judah, the songs of Zion.

2. *But the first great event in their history,* the birthday of their nation, their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, was specially memorable as "that day." And in every subsequent national deliverance, from the times of the Judges, all through the splendid leadership of David and the heroic days of the Maccabean brothers, that first deliverance seemed to be renewed, and the old song from the Red Sea shore was again chanted (Ex. xv. 6).

3. *In the infant days of the Primitive Church,* meeting then in the upper room in Jerusalem, when its two

leaders, Peter and John, were seized and confronted with "their rulers, and elders, and scribes," and sternly threatened "not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus." That was a day of deliverance. Then was seen how gloriously transformed were these two Galilean fishermen under the inspiration of the Kingdom of Christ, how sublimely fit they were to lead the forlorn hope of the Church through the breach of Judaism and heathenism on to the conquest of the world. See Acts iv. 19, 20, 23, 24. How deeply and rapturously impressed was that little church with the conviction that the power of Him who had made heaven and earth was then resting on their own chiefs, and making them bold to speak "*His name.*" They shook the very walls of the room with the volume of their song: "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

4. Another day of deliverance came to the early Church, *when the cry of the primitive martyrs was heard* (Rev. vi. 9, 10). That "little season" soon passed, and their cry was answered; rest came to the martyred Church. No more holy men were thrown to the lions, no more delicate women thrust into caldrons of boiling pitch; the sword slept in its scabbard, and crucifixions were ended. Then the churches had rest, and this hymn was joyously sung. Since those early centuries, God's Church has passed through many a fiery furnace, and has come out all the purer and all the stronger. And many a song of deliverance has floated up to heaven.

5. This season of gladness has been realised by God's people individually. (1.) *When a consciousness of the forgiveness of sins has come.* When in the temple of the soul this voice has been heard: "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." (2.) *When the child of God has been delivered from some dark calamity, so threatening that no human help could deliver.* (3.) *But the grandest deliverance is the final one.* The best wine is kept for the last cup. When the death-river is crossed, and the crystal gates respond to the command, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Then, when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, when standing within that city where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest, will the redeemed of the Lord shout this song as never before: "We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."—*William Parkes.*

Perfect Peace.

xxvi. 3–4. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, &c.*

Our text points to the infallible remedy for the worst of all forms of human ills, a burdened and disconsolate spirit—"perfect peace."

I. The Author of this peace is none other than God Himself. The mind of man is too active and capacious ever to find rest, unless it be in its Maker. This is the testimony of experience as well as of Scripture. Earthly honours, riches, friendships, leave the heart devoid of enduring peace, because they can do nothing to dispel the sense of guilt and the consequent apprehensions of the future which ever and anon disturb those who possess them most abundantly. We cannot have peace unless we have God for our portion. But how can God, the righteous governor of the universe, be at peace with us sinners? To this question a complete and glorious answer is found in the Gospel, and there only. God Himself, at infinite cost, has opened a way of peace by which we may return to Him. Peace is offered to all who will receive it as His gift, through our Lord Jesus Christ; but only from Him and thus can it be obtained.

II. The peace which God imparts to His people is "perfect." 1. In

its *source*. This determines its quality. The laws of the human mind are such that our happiness will partake of the character of the object from which it is derived. If it be from an uncertain and unsatisfying world, *it* will be just as uncertain and unsatisfying; if from the eternal and immutable God, *it* will be undisturbable. As to both his temporal and eternal necessities, the believer's Helper is omnipresent and omniscient, all-wise and all-merciful. What, then, can he fear (Ps. xxvii. 1)? 2. In its *measure*. It rises like a river, and swells and rolls onward until it bears sin and sorrow away into the land of forgetfulness. 3. In its *adaptation to our needs*. These do but afford the occasions for its triumphs. It comes in when all other joys go out, and erects its brightest monuments on the ruins of earthly hopes. There is no trial which it cannot enable us to endure (α). No wonder that Jesus calls it His peace (John xiv. 27), and bequeaths it to His disciples as the best legacy which it is in His power to bestow. That very repose in God which so filled and cheered His own bosom He delights to share with all who love Him.

III. If this perfect peace is to be ours, we must link ourselves on to God by a simple, earnest, childlike faith. As sinners we must begin by the exercise of a personal faith in His Son as our Saviour. 1. This is *essential*. Nothing else will answer the purpose. Whatsoever was the strength of the ark built by Noah, or its fitness to float on the water, it could save from the deluge those only who entered it; and so Christ's death on the cross to procure peace for us will avail us nothing unless through Him we seek reconciliation with God. 2. This is *sufficient*. Let this be done in the first instance, and be repeated as often as clouds overcast the mind and doubts arise in the heart, and there can be nothing to hinder the enjoyment of peace. Nothing more is needed. Once let a simple trust in the merits of the Saviour take possession of the bosom, and it will go further to produce abiding tranquillity than all the tears and vigils of the most perfect devotee. The peace thus coming to us will never end. Let the penitent sinner but stay himself on the Lord and trust in the God of his salvation, and though he "walk in darkness, and see no light," he is just as safe for both worlds as the power and grace of God can make him.

IV. We have to acknowledge that many who hope for salvation through Christ are not possessed of "perfect peace." Many believers are "in heaviness through manifold temptations," and their peace is more like an uncertain brook than a perpetual river moving calmly into the ocean. Why is this? 1. Sometimes, though rarely, because God has been pleased to withdraw the blessed feeling of undisturbed tranquillity, in order that He may produce a deeper sense of dependence on Him. In such cases, peace will be reached again through humble submission to the divine will concerning us, and trust in the unchangeableness of the divine love. We must not give way to despondency. We must be on the alert to hear God speaking comfort to us through His word. 2. Sometimes the believer's peace is interrupted by a derangement of the physical or mental system. Let us remember that while we are in the flesh we are liable to such trials, and that our salvation does not depend on our feelings, which are changeable as the clouds, but on the Rock of Ages. 3. Sometimes we permit our attention to be turned away from God and engrossed by our trials. It is with us as with Peter (Matt. xiv. 30). But then, like him, let us cry to the Lord, let us obey the exhortation of our text, and we shall find that He can give us both deliverance and peace. 4. Sometimes, alas! we forget that the faith to which peace is promised is a faith that shows itself in "patient continuance in well-doing" (Rom. ii. 7; James ii. 26). Let us not be surprised if, then, our peace departs. Let us return unto the Lord, and beseech Him to heal our backslidings.

Restored to the paths of righteousness, we shall find that they, and they alone, are "paths of peace."

V. It is the duty, as it is the privilege, of all believers to seek for "perfect peace." With any lower measure of this blessing, we should not be content. 1. Without it, we cannot possess the comfort which God desires that all His people should enjoy. 2. Without it, we cannot help our fellow-men as we ought. It is our duty to reveal to them the power of the grace of God; and in few ways can we so effectually stimulate our fellow-men to seek Him whom they need, as by manifesting that tranquillity they so much desire, and can find only in Him. 3. Without it, we cannot glorify God as we ought. What we *are* should move onlookers to praise Him, as a lovely landscape uplifts the thoughts of beholders to the Creator of all; but this can be only when the purposes of God in regard to us are fulfilled, and we are rejoicing in the possession of purity and "perfect peace."—*David Magie, D.D.: American National Preacher*, vol. xxv. pp. 221–231.

I. All true spiritual peace originates in reconciliation with God. The grand object of the Gospel is to bring about this peace (Luke ii. 14). Jesus Christ is designated "the Prince of peace;" the Father, "the God of peace." God is really reconciled, *i.e.*, is peaceably disposed towards us, "waiting to be gracious;" but men are not reconciled, not willing to renounce their rebellion and yield themselves to Him. They can have no true peace until they cast away their sins and cast themselves on the Divine mercy, as it is offered to us in and through Jesus Christ. But doing this, it and all other spiritual blessings shall be theirs (Isa. lv. 7; Rom. v. 1).

II. We attain to true spiritual peace precisely in proportion as we attain to perfect harmony with the Divine will. When we first become at peace with one with whom we have previously been at variance, it does not follow that we can at once fall in with all that is required of his household, however justly. So the peace of the regenerated man is not at first perfect, because his submission to the Divine Will is only partial. Afterwards, when he can truly say of all God's proceedings, "Thy will be done," and his mind is fully "stayed on God," even when perils threaten and sharp sacrifices are demanded, then his peace "flows like a river," and grows into "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

III. All true spiritual peace is supernatural in its origin. To grant this deep and abiding peace is the prerogative of the Divine Saviour. Friends may leave us houses, lands, gold, but only Christ can give us peace (John xiv. 27). "My peace!" What is Christ's peace? Not the peace of reconciliation, for with God He never was at variance (Heb. iv. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 22). "My peace" could only mean that mental peace which flows from perfect harmony with the Divine will. Such peace can come to us only through the educational power of Christ. The more we obey the Master, the more implicit will be our submission to God, and the deeper our peace. Only then shall we know "perfect peace." Such peace, like every Christian grace and holy virtue, being beyond the reach of nature, is supernatural (James i. 17). The child of God, calm amid a tempest of trouble, often excites the wonder of the world. Such quietness of soul is not the result of temperament or of training. It is God's work: "*Thou* wilt keep," &c.

IV. All true spiritual peace is practical in its results. Though in its Divine creation it is "past finding out," it is not a mystical rapture, a thing in the clouds; it is a reality, a living principle arousing itself for the battle, and standing on the watch-tower amid the struggles and trials of daily life (Phil. iv. 7; R. V.) As a garrison seizes and retains a stronghold, so "the peace of God" takes military possession of the soul, and beats off all outside assailants. It has an active as well as a passive side, like

a staff which we can draw forth for a fight as well as lean on for rest. 1. It protects the *mind*. Sceptical thoughts, atheistic objections, may invade the mind and perplex the reason, but then we fall back on this peace. We *know* that we are never so calm and strong as when we obey the will of God, and keep conscience on our side. Rectitude bringing peace, is an evidence of the divinity of our religion stronger than any sceptical objection that can be brought against it. 2. It protects the *heart*. Affection allures it; joy and sorrow, hope and fear assail it; but the Christian can withstand these assaults, because he opposes higher things to lower; Divine pleasures to human, riches to riches, honours to honours. He can realise the meaning of the Master's words (Matt. xix. 29). Resting on such promises as these, he is "kept in perfect peace."—*G. R. Miall.*

I. Peace is at once a blessing, and a mother of blessings. How many spring from her! How the poets have sung of her! Peace is needed by every man; every man is conscious of disturbing influences without and within. Peace is earnestly sought by most men. What sanguinary wars have been waged to obtain peace!

II. The idea of "perfect peace," presented in the text, seems to most men at the most a beautiful dream; in proportion to their experience of life is their disbelief that it can be theirs. But it is declared here that God bestows it on every man whose mind is stayed on Him.

What interpretation are we to put upon this declaration? The experience of God's people must be our guide in answering this question. This makes it abundantly clear that the peace which God secures for His people does not consist in freedom from assault. This is sometimes vouchsafed them; their foes are scattered, and songs of triumph are given them, such as this chapter. But their experience, taken as a whole, may be said to be a continuous verification of our Saviour's declaration: "In the world ye have tribulation."

Instead of caring to secure for His people freedom from assault, He seems rather often to prefer to expose them to it (Matt. iii. 16; iv. 1). He prefers rather to teach them to fight and to conquer; to develop and discipline their virtues by struggles in which they are tried up to the very last point of endurance. For this end, He turns a deaf ear to their prayer, "Lead us not into temptation;" and lets loose upon them foes bent upon their destruction.

Notwithstanding, they may have "perfect peace." "In the world ye have tribulation: in Me ye have peace." Not merely that the peace is to succeed the tribulation; the two may co-exist. It is quite possible for peace to dwell in the heart of the chief ruler of a nation waging a terrible war (*β*); or in the heart of the captain of a vessel storm-driven; or in the heart of a merchant in the midst of a commercial panic, because he knows that the struggle will for him end in victory. So in the midst of all the conflicts of life, a Christian may have "perfect peace."

III. A Christian; he, and no other! Not every profound peace is "perfect peace." The contemporaries of Noah and of Lot; Belshazzar and his court were in "perfect peace," as far as their feelings were concerned, in the very hour that destruction came upon them. But however much the feelings may be soothed, there is no "perfect peace' that has not a sure basis of *fact*. For the peace of the wicked there can be no such basis; God and all the forces of the universe are arrayed against the wicked, and their ultimate destruction is sure (Isa. xlviii. 22; Rom. ii. 8, 9). Repentance and reconciliation with God through Christ are the essential preliminary conditions of "perfect peace."

IV. But is "perfect peace" the possession of all who have complied with these conditions? No. Why? Because they have not yet learned to stay their minds on God. They have faith, but it is yet in the germ, and they have not yet been trained in its exer-

cise (Matt. xiv. 31; xvi. 8). Not upon God exclusively are their hopes set (Ps. lxii. 5); it is but seldom that they do look up to Him, and hence their faith is imperfect and intermittent. It remains in the power of their foes to distress them; anxieties as to their temporal necessities, sad forebodings as to their eternal welfare, harass and weaken them. (For other reasons, see preceding outlines.)

But there are those who have passed through and beyond these elementary stages of Christian experience, and, steadily pursuing the paths of righteousness, they have "perfect peace." Their circumstances may be adverse and threatening, but they possess a tranquillity of soul that is undisturbable (2 Cor. iv. 8–10); nay, is even triumphant (Rom. v. 3; Acts xvi. 25; Hab. iii. 17–19).

V. In this "perfect peace" these rare souls rest, because they are kept in it by God Himself: "*Thou* wilt keep," &c.

1. *How?* (1.) By means of the deliverances which from time to time He works for them. Memory becomes a treasure-house of Divine faithfulness and mercy, and out of it their souls are fed and sustained when a season of famine and danger has befallen them. Then they know that He who has delivered will deliver, and they wait upon Him with calm, joyful expectation. (2.) To these souls the records of God's deliverances of His people in ancient days become prophetic of deliverances He will still work for His people right on to the end of time. By His Spirit He works in them an immovable, soul-inspiring confidence in His own unchangeableness. To them He is "the living God," acting to-day precisely as He did in the days of old. (3.) But, above all, He produces in their souls, as the chief safeguard of their tranquillity, a childlike confidence in His personal love for them. There is nothing they are so sure of as that God loves them, and being sure of this, all the rest follows as a matter of course. They never forget what proof God has given of His love for them, and hence they reason precisely as St. Paul did (Rom. viii. 31–39). This priceless revelation He makes to many who are "babes" in this world's wisdom (Matt. xi. 25), and to others also who know all that science has to teach them of the vastness of the universe and of their own relative insignificance.

2. *Why?* (1.) Because it is a state of soul in which He delights. "The God of peace" desires that in this, as in all respects, His people—His *children*—should be like Him. (2.) Because they trust in Him. Devoting themselves to His service, and putting themselves into His care, His honour is pledged to the defence and maintenance of their welfare. Will He forfeit it? *Men* are far gone in depravity when they willingly disappoint those who trust in them: guides of the blind, lawyers and their clients, doctors and their patients, widows and their business advisers (γ). What sacrifices we make to fulfil the expectations we have encouraged our children to form! Will it be otherwise with our Father in heaven? Never!

VI. What then? 1. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." There is more than "strength;" but there *is* the "strength to carry out His wise and loving purposes towards His people." He can do more than pity. 2. Let us cultivate the habit of trusting IN THE LORD, and of doing this in all the vicissitudes of our lot, "for ever." 3. And that this habit may become to us invariable and its exercise easy, let us accept with all simplicity the revelation which He has been pleased to make of Himself as our Father in heaven. Precisely in proportion as we do this we shall stay our mind on Him, and we shall enter into that "perfect peace" which He desires should be the inheritance of all His children.

(α.) Can we turn aside and see what light this peace of God can diffuse through the chamber of disease; how it can tranquillise the bosom of the poor widow surrounded with

her helpless babes; what serenity it can shed around the tottering steps of some aged saint; and how it can irradiate the gloom even of the grave itself, and not feel that it is rightly called "perfect?" True, it might often be more fully possessed on earth, and it will be more fully possessed in heaven. But if we remember what it has actually done in ten thousand instances, when the dearest friends have died, and property has taken wings and flown away, and one pall of sadness has seemed to overspread the entire world, we shall feel that it is impossible to give it too high a name or attach to it too high a value.—*Magie.*

(β.) In the darkest period of the American civil war, as Mr. George William Curtis was taking leave of President Lincoln, the President placed his hand on his shoulder, and said with deep feeling: "Don't fear, my son; we shall beat them."

(γ.) Sir William Napier describes, in his "History of the Peninsular War," that at the battle of Busaco in Portugal how affecting it was to see a beautiful Portuguese orphan girl coming down the mountain, driving an ass loaded with all her property through the midst of the armies. She passed over the field of battle with a childish simplicity, scarcely understanding which were French and which were English, and no one on either side was so hard-hearted as to touch her. Sir William Napier once in his walks met with a little girl of five years old, sobbing over a pitcher she had broken. She, in her innocence, asked him to mend it. He told her that he could not mend it, but that he would meet her trouble by giving her sixpence to buy a new one, if she would meet him there at the same hour the next evening, as he had no money in his purse that day. When he returned home he found that there was an invitation waiting for him, which he particularly wished to accept. But he could not then have met the little girl at the time stated, and he gave up the invitation, saying, "I could not disappoint her; she trusted in me so implicitly." That was the true Christian English gentleman and soldier.—*Dean Stanley.*

The Righteousness of God and His People.

xxvi. 7. *The way of the just, &c.*

Isaiah foretold the captivity of Judah in Babylon, also its termination. This chapter is a song ready for the occasion. It relates the story, and it unfolds the principles that underlie the events.

Our text is thoroughly practical. It reminds us,—

I. That righteousness is the personal characteristic of God and of His redeemed people. 1. *God is righteous.* "Thou most upright." He is perfectly righteous. It is essential to the Divine nature; the contrary cannot be supposed; as heat is natural to fire. God Himself, His laws, His providential government, even His redeeming mercy, are all characterised by perfect rectitude. So prominent is this idea that we are taught to exercise simple faith in God, and assume that we are imperfectly informed if we are unable to reconcile anything in our experience with His perfect righteousness. 2. *His people also are righteous*—here called "the just." It is suggestive when God's people are thus called by a name similar to His own. They share in the same righteousness, although in different degrees. More is intended than that they are in a justified state. That is implied. They are justified by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the text refers to the righteousness which assimilates them to the Divine nature. The grace of God produces a new nature. Saul of Tarsus became a new man on his conversion. A savage adopts the habits and forms the tastes of civilised Christian life. It is a new nature. 1 John iv. 4: "Ye are of God." As children partake the nature of their parents, His nature is in them, though not yet perfected. Their sympathies are with Him. In so far as they are unrighteous, they are inconsistent with their true selves. The life of God in the regenerated soul is a principle ever tending toward the perfect righteousness of the Divine nature from which it came.

II. When righteousness characterises a person, it will dictate his conduct. 1. *The conduct of the righteous man.* "The way of the just is uprightness;" his course of life. He is erect in his moral manhood, as contrasted with one who is bent and

crooked. Men's ideas of uprightness are apt to become partial and one-sided. Some seem to imagine that all demands of righteousness are met by the acceptance of Christ and the experience of spiritual feeling, while they overlook the demands of human relationships. Others confine their view to men. They imagine all demands are met, when they are fair and honourable in their dealings with men, while God is left out of consideration. The Divine idea of righteousness is not thus partial. It takes in the whole of our moral relations, our relations both to God and man. And the good man strives to bring his whole life into conformity to it. [Work this out in detail: "The way of the just is uprightness" (1), in regard to God; (2), in regard to man].

2. *The conduct of the righteous God.* "Thou most upright dost weigh the path of the just." At first sight like confusion of metaphor. It means to ponder it. The heathen symbol of Divine righteousness is that of justice holding the scales (Dan. v. 27). The conduct of the righteous is weighed. God observes it; His honour is concerned in it. He will eventually pronounce upon it (2 Cor. v. 10).

Examine, then:—1. Are you among the just? Have you experienced a change of heart? 2. Are you pursuing the path of the just? This applies to your actual dealing with God and with man. Consider how far imperfection may be consistent with reality. Do not try how far you may go safely. There comes a point at which a man must be condemned, at which he must condemn himself. At that point he will either repent or harden himself. Let us cultivate the highest measures of practical uprightness.—*J. Rawlinson.*

The Just Man's Security.

xxvi. 7. *Thou most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.*

We can scarcely find anywhere a more touching description of the God of our salvation than that furnished by Job (xxv. 10). God has always given His people songs in the night, and in the night-time of affliction He has furnished them with songs of consolation and confidence. Our text is a part of one of those songs. The Chaldean power threatened God's people. They were instructed to cherish a firm faith in God. Not a breath of despair was to reach the camp of the enemy; rather they were taught a scornful defiance of that proud king who had defied the armies of the living God (Isa. xxxvii. 22).

"In that day shall this song be sung." The connection may teach us that it is wisdom to treasure up a source of consolation against the day of adversity. It is in spring that we are to prepare for winter; in the morning of life to prepare for old age. The oil must be ready for the midnight hour. No good soldier will run for his armour "when the enemy comes in like a flood."

The text suggests *the Christian's reasons for security and repose under the various events of life.* These are—

I. **The perfect wisdom and rectitude which marks God's universal government.** "Thou most upright, dost weigh," &c. This world is not a neglected province of the Divine Dominions. That impression of the Divine supremacy which inspires the songs of seraphs quickens the joy of frail humanity. While thrones, principalities, and powers exclaim as with the voice of many waters, "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth," the inhabitants of the earth roll back the response, "The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice."

The Christian knows no such Deity as Chance or Fate. This is God's world, nor has He left it like an ocean weed to float at random on the dark and shoreless ocean of uncertainty. What was worthy His creation must be worth His

control. God's method of government partakes of His own perfections, and is therefore infinitely wise and good. We rejoice that God ruleth over *all*, and keeps the dominion of the world in His own hands. The remotest consequences of things are all seen by Him; whatever evil occurs He permits; whatever good arises He originates; whatever series of causes come to a final issue, the train was laid by His wisdom, conducted by His power, controlled by His goodness. This topic, therefore, furnishes a ground of security and repose to the Christian. Amidst the shakings of the nations and the storms of life, it is delightful to know that the sceptre of universal power is in the hand of Infinite Love. He reigneth, be the earth ever so unquiet.

II. The minute attention which God pays to the individual interests of His people. This comes out whichever interpretation you put upon the word here translated "weigh." It may mean, to weigh as in scales or a balance (Ps. lviii. 3); but it may also mean, and does usually, to make straight, or smooth, or level (Ps. lxxviii. 50, &c.) (*Barnes*). "He 'weighs' or 'ponders' (*s. w. a.* in Prov. iv. 26, v. 21) the path, with a view to keeping it straight and level" (*Kay*). 1. The idea of "weighing" implies careful impression. The balance is held with a careful hand, and a keen eye is on both the scales. This is a source of comfort to the just, and to them alone. 2. The same minute, condescending observance is implied in the other interpretation. God will make a plain, level way for His people to walk in. All obstacles to their progress shall be removed. They never have any need to turn aside from the well-constructed road of God's commandments into "crooked ways" of man's devising (Ps. xvii. 3–5). They shall reach their destination in the better world. *Samuel Thodey.*

The Way of God's Judgments.

xxvi. 8. *Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee.*

I. Observe what God's judgments are. They are simply the expression of His thoughts. His final judgment is the declaration of His thoughts of a man's character; His judgments here are also His declaration of what He thinks of our conduct and ways. One special thing for which psalmists and prophets adore Him is that men can see that His judgments are true and righteous (Ps. xix. 9; cxix. 75, &c.) Their tendency and aim is to teach men what righteousness is (ver. 9).

II. The way of God's judgments is the way of His laws. The calamities which men call "judgments" are generally the results of infraction by them of the laws by which He governs the universe.

The civil war in America was a judgment of God because it was a natural result of their toleration and defence of slavery; the war, with all its terrors, was a heavy penalty, and was clearly connected with their sin. So the cattle-plague in England was doubtless a natural result of some violation, through carelessness or greed, of God's laws concerning the breeding and tending of cattle, and was thus one of God's judgments.

III. The way of God's judgments prescribes our way of prayer and expectation. We are to pray and expect, not that, while we continue as we were, God will remove the judgment; but that He will help us to understand it, and that He will dispose us to abandon the conduct that has brought it upon us. In thus waiting upon God—with penitence for our transgression, with prayer for light, and with sincere resolve to amend—we may expect God to bless us; but this we may expect only while we wait upon Him thus.—*Alexander Mackennal, B.S: Sermon on the Cattle-plague.*

Those who wait for God in the way

of His judgments are, 1. Those who in prosperous and peaceful times endeavour to serve Him. 2. Those who desire to learn from them the lessons they were designed to teach. 3. Those who honour God by submission and trust in the trying hour. 4. These, even in the midst of judgment, may confidently expect the favour of God. A purpose of benevolence runs through even the stern and "strange work" of justice; and God, even when He chastises, will not utterly smite down the trusting heart.—*William Manning.*

Trust amid Trials.

xxvi. 8, 9. *Yea, in the way of Thy judgments . . . will I seek Thee early.*

In this verse the prophet expresses the confiding trust of God's people amid times of judgment. It is as though they had said, "When the pathway assigned for Thy people was rough with judgments,—sore inflictions of national calamity,—even then, Lord, did we wait still on Thee in patient, trustful hope, and our desire was toward the remembrance of Thy name." Note the view this passage affords of the character and experience of God's people.

I. They wait upon Him. Wait in the most unpromising circumstances.

"Yea, in the way of Thy judgments have we waited for Thee." When all is dark and threatening; when the promised mercy is long delayed and all seems settling into gloom and desolation; when the dungeon has no lamp and the night no star, even then does the Church wait for God (chap. viii. 17). It is a genuine mark of grace to trust a withdrawing God and never forego confidence in Him, but look for Him as in the darkest night the shivering sentinel looks for the morning star; as the husbandman amid the severest winter believes in the returning spring. Such was the faith of Habakkuk (Hab. iii. 17–19). So, like Aaron's rod, the Christian's hope will bloom in the midst of barrenness. "Yea, in the way of Thy judgments have I waited for Thee."

II. Their desires centre in Him. "The desire of our soul is to the remembrance of Thy name." God's *name* is a compendious expression for the fulness of His perfections. God's people are concerned for the honour of God's name whatever becomes of their own. Religion consists much in holy desire. "Thy servants who desire to fear Thy name." They desire to live in the fear of God, in His love and in His service. Desire is love on the wing; delight is love at rest. David combines both (Ps. xxxvii. 4). Making God our heart's delight, He will not fail to give us our heart's desire. This desire, if genuine, will never be satisfied without God. As well offer lumps of gold or strains of music to one dying of thirst, as offer the world's best gifts to that soul which truly thirsts for God and His righteousness (Ps. lxxiii. 25). 1. *Where genuine, this desire is the fruit of implanted grace.* It is an evidence of a renewed nature. The beating of the pulse proves life. That which aspires to God has come from heaven. If the iron, contrary to its nature, moves upward, it is a sign that some magnetic force attracts it; and if the soul aspires to God, that is a sign that the grace of God has visited that soul. 2. *Genuine desires after God are influential.* Real desires govern our conduct (Prov. xxi. 25). It is useless to pretend that we thirst for grace, if by devout prayer and holy resolve we do not let down the bucket into the well.

III. They seek Him diligently night and day. "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early." Our Lord gives it as the distinctive mark of God's elect that they cry night and day to Him. This habit of prayer prompting to duty, tests the sincerity of our desires, &c.—*Samuel Thodey.*

Night Longings for God.

xxvi. 9. ***With my soul have I desired Thee in the night.***

Night appears to be a time peculiarly favourable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it; and the stars looking down from heaven upon us shine as if they would attract us up to God. But I leave that thought altogether; I shall speak,—

I. To Confirmed Christians. 1. The Christian man has not always a bright shining sun; he has seasons of darkness and night. The light is sometimes eclipsed. At certain periods clouds and darkness cover the sun. The best of God's saints have their nights. Sometimes it is a night over the whole Church at once. Sometimes the darkness over the soul arises from temporal distresses, sometimes from spiritual discouragements. 2. A Christian man's religion will keep its colour in the night. Men will follow Christ when every one cries Hosanna! Demas and Mr. Hold-the-world, and a great many others, are very pious people in easy times. They will always go with Christ by daylight, and will keep Him company so long as fashion gives religion the doubtful benefit of its patronage; but they will not go with Him in the night. But the best test of a Christian is the night. If he only remained steadfast by daylight, when every coward is bold, where would he be? There would be no beauty in his courage, no glory in his bravery. There is full many a Christian whose piety did not burn much when he was in prosperity; but it will be known in adversity. Grind the diamond a little, and you shall see it glisten. 3. All that the Christian wants in the night is his God. I cannot understand how it is, unless it is to be accounted for by the corruption of our spirit, that when everything goes well with us we are setting our affection first on one object and then on another; and that desire which is as insatiable as death and as deep as hell never rests satisfied. But if you place a Christian in trouble, you will find that he does not want gold then, nor carnal honour; he wants his God. 4. There are times when all the saint can do is to desire. The more evidences a man has of his piety the better. Many witnesses will carry our case better at the bar than a few. But there are seasons when a Christian cannot get any. He will have lost assurance. But there is one witness that very seldom is gagged, even in the night, and that is, "I have desired Thee—I have desired Thee in the night."

II. To Newly Awakened Souls. I will now endeavour to answer three questions. 1. How am I to know that my desires are proofs of a work of grace in my soul? (1.) By their *constancy*. Many a man when he hears a stirring sermon has a strong desire to be saved, but he goes home and forgets it. A certain measure of constancy is essential to its real value as evidence of a Divine work. (2.) By their *efficacy*. If they lead you into real "works meet for repentance," then they come from God. Seeking will not do; there must be striving. Not good intentions only, but practical desires that lead you to give up your sins. (3.) By their *urgency*. You want to be saved some of you, but it must be this day next week. But when the Holy Ghost speaks, He says "*To-day*." Now or never.

2. If I have desired God, why have I not obtained my desire before now? (1.) You have hardly a right to ask the question. Perhaps God has not granted your desire because He designs to show you more of your wickedness, more of the blackness of sin, that your longings may be quickened, that He may display more fully the riches of His grace at the last. (2.) Perhaps it has come al-

ready. Some of you are pardoned and do not know it. Do not expect miracles and visions. (3.) Will God grant my desire at last? Verily. His refusal would dishonour His word. You would be the first that ever perished desiring, praying, trusting in Jesus.—*C. H. Spurgeon, New Park Street Pulpit*, 1855, p. 237.

The Necessity and Profitableness of Chastisement.

xxvi. 9. *When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

I. *It is a lamentable proof of the depravity of our nature, that in general, apart from God's judgments, the wicked will not learn righteousness.* 1. The history of the world shows that men will not give heed to the lessons they *ought* to learn from the beauty of creation, the established laws of nature, and the ordinary blessings of Providence (Rom. i. 20–23). Extraordinary blessings excite only transient emotions of praise and thanksgiving; and too often serve only as occasions for showing greater alienation of heart from God, and for filling up the measure of iniquity (H. E. I., 3997–4014). 2. All this may be abundantly illustrated from the history of our own country. With us times of national prosperity have been times of national profanity. 3. On every hand we find individual proofs of the same sad fact.

II. *When such special interferences of Providence take place as in Scripture language are called "judgments," the inhabitants of the earth sometimes learn righteousness.* In this respect, signal chastisements are ordinarily more effective than the most bountiful displays of kindness and compassion. 1. Scripture abounds with statements of the need and profitableness of chastisement (Ps. cxix. 67, 71; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, &c.) It is intimated that afflictions form an essential part of the discipline of the righteous (Ps. xxxix. 19; Rev. iii. 19, &c.) Some cross is needful, as long as we live, to keep us in our right place, dependent on our Maker; and hence those who have few outward afflictions to teach them the necessary lessons of humility, generally experience a large allotment of inward trials on that very account; and sometimes both the outward and the inward afflictions are combined for this purpose (2 Cor. xii. 7, 10). 2. Even without the Bible, the fact asserted in our text was so universal and prominent, that it by no means escaped the wiser part of the heathen moralists. A Greek historian has observed, "that fortune never bestows liberally an unmixed happiness on mankind. With all her gifts, there is conjoined some disastrous circumstance, in order to chastise men into a reverence for the gods, whom, in a continual course of prosperity, they are apt to neglect and forget."

Conclusion.—1. *Few things are more perilous than long-continued prosperity.*—Ordinarily its effects on the religious opinions and moral habits of nations and individuals are most lamentable (Deut. xxxi. 20, 29). Let those, then, who are prosperous be especially on their guard (Deut. viii. 10, 11). 2. *For "judgments" we should be thankful.* They are not displays of vindictiveness, but gracious and compassionate dispensations, intended to warn, that God may not be compelled to destroy. 3. *To the lessons of God's "judgments" we should give heed.* Prominent among them is this, that "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."—*Isaac Milner, D.D.: Sermons*, vol. i. pp. 1–54.

I. Consider the Author of those judgments and calamities with which we are visited; the ends for which they are sent; and their fitness to instruct us in righteousness.—1. Judgments *come from God.* His providence rules over all, and all second causes, animate and inanimate, are directed and overruled by Him. This is the decision of *reason*, and the declaration of *revelation*

(Amos iii. 6; Isa. xlv. 6, 7). Imitate, then, the ancient believers who, whatever were the inferior causes of their affliction, without justifying the instruments, and leaving to God the punishment of the unrighteous, ever looked up to Him who ruleth over all (Gen. xlv. 5, 7; Job i. 21; H. E. I., 139). 2. But *why does God visit us with judgments?* Not that He delights in the miseries of His creatures (Lam. iii. 33); but that they may be humbled, convinced of their iniquity, and taught righteousness. We often compel Him thus to deal with us. We permit His favours to hide the hand that confers them; and, like Jonah, when the ocean of life is smooth, and the gales of prosperity pleasantly blow, we flee from Him, and slumber in our sin. In the greatness of His compassion, He employs the rough means necessary to arouse us (Ps. lxxviii. 34, 35). 3. *There is a fitness in judgments to cause men to awake to righteousness.* (1.) They deeply affect us, and lead us to repentance, because they are rarer than mercies. Our attention is most arrested by that which is novel. We gaze more earnestly on the sun, when for a few moments it is in eclipse, than we have done for months while it was steadily pursuing its course through the heavens. We are more roused by a storm for a day, than by serene weeks. It is thus with mercies and judgments. (2.) They powerfully address that passion which has most influence on the greater part of mankind—the passion of fear. They present God in such a character, that even the most stout-hearted sinners tremble to oppose Him. (3.) Because they teach on that most compendious and efficacious mode—by example. On beholding them we feel that the threatenings of God are not a dead letter which need fill us with no dismay. Yet they have not invariably this effect. There are some who can resist judgments as well as mercies (2 Chron. xxviii. 22; Isa. xxii. 12, 13).

II. WHY THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD DO NOT ALWAYS TEACH MEN RIGHTEOUSNESS. Judgments that light upon others are frequently rendered useless. 1. By disbelief of His declarations. 2. By false views of His character (H. E. I. 2180–2184, 2282). 3. By unscriptural views of our own state and condition. 4. By a base inattention to the operations of Providence. 5. By a stupid insensibility to our danger. We tranquilly behold the lightning flashing at a distance, and suppose that it will not hurt us, as though we were of a different nature from those who are consumed by it (Zeph. iii. 6, 7). 6. Because, instead of being humbled and led to think of our sins, we vent our grief only in vain regrets and useless lamentations. We forget who is the Author of these judgments, and so, instead of humbly saying with Job, "Shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me," we waste our strength in profitless complaints of men and things.—*Henry Hollock, D.D.: Sermons*, pp. 505–512.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

xxvi. 9, 10. *For when Thy judgments, &c.*

I. *The judgments of God are frequently in the earth*—such as earthquakes, hurricanes, pestilence, commercial disasters. These are not, as the infidel asserts, merely the result of the working of natural causes: these public calamities are the punishment of public sins. *Nations* are thus punished, because they have no immortality, and therefore, if they are to be judged at all, must be judged here and now. Without these chastisements, which often astonish the hearts of the most insensible, and bring the most incredulous to their right mind, the world would be only a theatre of atheism and crime. That these calamities are strictly "the judgments of God," is the testimony of *Scripture* (Amos iii. 6; Jer. xxxii. 23, &c.), of the universal *conscience*, which speaks loudly in times of calamity (*a*), and of

reason. Acknowledge a First Cause which directs all things, and we are obliged to confess that public calamities are the judgments of God.

II. *God's design in sending His judgments upon the earth is that the inhabitants thereof should learn righteousness* —righteousness towards Him, towards their neighbours, and towards themselves. This is His design, and to comply with it is the indispensable duty of those whom He afflicts (*β*). The natural tendency of these chastisements is to remove the obstacles that ordinarily oppose themselves to our conversion: indolence, thoughtlessness, abuse of God's patience, the hope of long life (*γ*).

III. *God's design in sending judgments upon the earth is often frustrated by the fact that some sinners are so obdurate that neither judgments nor mercies will move them* (v. 10). The "favour" here spoken of is a temporal favour, a deliverance from physical misery, a suspension of the judgments which were falling upon the wicked. Such favours, instead of calling forth gratitude, are frequently turned into reasons for sinning (Eccl. viii. 11; Ex. viii. 15). To harden ourselves against the "judgments" of God is a great sin, but to harden ourselves against His "favours" is a still greater sin. Those who commit it leave the Almighty no alternative but to utterly destroy them.—*Daniel de Superville: Sermons*, pp. 332–361.

(*α*.) We see that people of every description endeavour to appease Heaven, in time of public calamities, by prayers, incense, sacrifices, and solemn humiliations. And though many of them have been deceived in the object of their worship, and have erred in many of the practices which they adopted as proper to appease the Divinity, their actions set forth the feelings of man's conscience, and prove that it is a general sentiment, that in public calamities we ought to learn righteousness.—*Superville.*

(*β*.) Judgment that falls upon another should be as a catechism to us by way of instruction; when judgments are abroad in the world, shall not the people learn righteousness? Shall the lion roar and the beasts of the field not tremble? Shall God's hand lie heavily upon us, and we stand by, as idle spectators, nothing at all minding what is done? Shall our very next neighbour's house be on fire, and we look on as men unconcerned in the danger? It cannot be, it must not be. There is, without all doubt, the same combustible stuff—the same, if not greater sins—lodged in our hearts, and the same punishment hovering over our heads; it is, therefore, high time to look about us.—*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(*γ*.) Herodotus informs us, that in a certain temple of Egypt there was a statue of Sennacherib with an inscription, the sense of which was, "Learn to fear the Deity, in looking at me." The judgments of God upon rebellious sinners are monuments which God erects in the world, and which express, in characters which all men should read, "Learn to fear the Deity, in looking at us." A celebrated poet among the ancient Romans, in describing the divers punishments of hell, presents us with a fine sentence, "Learn righteouness by us, and do not despise the gods." It appears by this, that the secrets of man's conscience, and his natural sentiments, lead him to profit by the examples which God exhibits of His justice, whether in this world or the next, and to respect a Supreme Being who knows how to avenge Himself, both now and hereafter.—*Superville.*

National Peace the Gift of God.

(A Thanksgiving Sermon.)

xxvi. 12. ***Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou hast wrought all our work in us.***

The joyfulness of the occasion. Peace a greater blessing than mere victory; for he that celebrates victory celebrates an event which has been produced by an incalculable measure of human suffering. Let us consider—

I. What there is in the restoration of peace, generally considered, to excite our gratitude. 1. *The effusion of human blood is stayed*, and all the suffering inseparable from war. 2. *The injurious effects of war on human character* afford another reason for thanksgiving on the return of peace. War renders men callous to human misery. The sacredness of human life is forgotten. Wars lead to intestine dissensions, and embitter and perpetuate national animosities.

II. What there is in the particular circumstances of this country to warrant us in considering the blessing as of special and particular value. 1. *The triumph of which this peace is the result is the triumph of a righteous cause.* Peace is often the result of the superiority acquired by the aggressor. The cause of right does not always at once prevail. Unoffending natives are conquered, or obliged to submissions contrary to their rights and interests, and then peace follows; peace dictated, not argued. There is peace, but not the spirit of peace. 2. *We have preserved our national honour.* Our victory has not been purchased by any alliance of which we have cause to be ashamed. 3. *Peace does not find us, as it finds many nations, with our houses desolated and our cities destroyed by fire.* 4. *It was seasonable.* We had put forth our utmost strength. Had we not succeeded at the moment we should have fallen to rise no more as a nation of the first order. 5. *It may be considered an indication of the Divine approbation.* On this subject we would not be presumptuous, but it may at least be affirmed that the happy change in our affairs, which has ultimately led to peace, followed, and, in some instances, immediately followed, certain acts of national reformation (*e.g.*, the emancipation of the slaves) and acknowledgment of God which, from the condescending assurance of His Word, we know must have been acceptable to Him. 6. *It will increase our means of promoting the kingdom of Christ in the world, and thus establish our national prosperity by continuing to us the blessing of God.*

III. The reasons of our thankful acknowledgment of God on this occasion. He is the giver of the blessing of peace. Text. This is a most important principle, and if our hearts be not firmly grounded in it, our thanksgiving is a mockery; for why do we thank Him if we ascribe the work to second causes? He that excludes God from the world of providence might as well exclude Him from the world of nature. He who can attribute the events which are daily taking place in society, and especially such events as are connected with the celebration of this day, to mere human agency, is not less an Atheist than the man who ascribes the birth and being of the fair system of the universe to chance or the dance of atoms.

CONCLUSION.—The proper expression of our thankfulness for this great blessing will be to do our utmost in the diffusion of the Gospel, that the final reign of the Prince of Peace may commence, and "quietness and assurance for ever" become the lot of man. —*Richard Watson: Works*, vol. ii. pp. 20–40.

HOLINESS ACCOMPLISHED, PEACE ORDAINED.

xxvi. 12. *Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*

Rather, "*for us.*" The Church acknowledges that all her deliverances and successes have been accomplished for her; and on what God has done for her in the past, she rightly bases her expectation as to what God will do for her in the future. He who was able to deliver His people from their bondage in Babylon, would secure peace for them when He had restored them to their own land. But, then, of all the works that God accomplishes *for* His people, some of the most important are precisely those which He accomplishes *in* them. So we may profitably meditate on our text as it stands.

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S CONDITION.

1. *A divine work has been accomplished for him.* "*Thou,*" &c. Throughout, the New Testament teaches us that the Christian is a man, not who has delivered himself, but who has been delivered; not a hero who broke the chains by which he was bound, but a poor slave of sin who was set free and

uplifted to true manhood (Phil. ii. 13; Eph. ii. 10); everything is ascribed to the Spirit—the life, the good works, the comforts of the Christian (John iii. 5; Gal. v. 16, 22; Acts ix. 31). 2. *As the operation is divine, so is it internal in its effects.* We should never overlook what God has done for us in His kind and tender providence (Ps. xxiii. 6). But the greatest of all God's works for us is redemption by the blood of the cross. This was accomplished long ago (John xix. 30). Nothing can now be added to it, but you are mistaken if you suppose that His work *for* you is to supersede His work *in* you. If your sins are not subdued as well as pardoned, you will never be able to serve and enjoy God. Unless you have a meetness for heaven, as well as a title to it, you will never be at home there. The salvation that is promised and accomplished is internal (John iv. 14; Ezek. xi. 19, 20; Ps. li. 10). 3. *The operation is manifold in its influence.* "*All* our works." How much needs to be done in man! Conscience is to be awakened, purified, pacified; the understanding is to be enlightened; the judgment is to be informed; the will is to be subdued; the affections to be spiritualised; the world is to be dethroned in the heart, and holy principles implanted there. There needs the continuing act of a performing God from the hour of the first conviction of sin to the resurrection of the body unto eternal life (Phil. i. 6). 4. *His divine work is acknowledged.* "Thou *hast* wrought," &c. Much remains to be done in us, but much has been accomplished in every believer, and it should be acknowledged. Humility well becomes us, but gratitude becomes us equally (Ps. lxvi. 16).

II. HIS FUTURE EXPECTATION.

"Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us." 1. There is an *appointment* or *ordination.* To ordain is an act of authority and power. You may wish and promise a thing, but the monarch ordains, and what he ordains is supported by all the resources of the realm, and will be accomplished. Much more shall God's counsel stand and His pleasure be done. 2. What is the *blessing* He will ordain? "Peace!" Peace *temporal* (Prov. xvi. 7). Peace *spiritual* (α).

III. THE DEPENDENCE OF THE EXPECTATION ON THE CONDITION.

"Thou wilt . . for Thou hast." The expectations of God's people are based—1. On the experience of God's people in all generations (Ps. xxii. 4). 2. On their own experience of His faithfulness and mercy (Ps. cxvi. 1, 2) (β).—*William Jay: Sunday Evening Sermons, &c.*, pp. 306–312.

(α.) See outlines on verse 3.—This peace of the Christian often fluctuates. It has various degrees. Some have comparatively little of it, arising from constitutional malady, from ignorance, or as a correction for sin, but it commonly increases in death. It is therefore compared to a river which meanders and fertilises as it goes, but becomes wider and deeper as it approximates to the sea; so the peace of God's people generally increases as they get nearer eternity.—*Jay.*

(β.) When a friend has always been kind, we think it base and unworthy not to suppose that he is ready to succour and help. But here we have the advantage: Men may be weak and unable to help, but God is almighty; men may change their mind, but with Him is "no shadow of turning." Remember what God has done, view it as a pledge, a beginning, an earnest foretaste of what He will do. Has He not shown you the evil of sin, the beauty of holiness, and the preciousness of a Saviour? If He had a mind to destroy you, would He have shown you such things as these? Nay, He will ordain everything for your welfare.—*Jay*

H. E. I. 2363–2377, 2791.

MAN'S HOLINESS, GOD'S WORKMANSHIP.

xxvi. 12. *Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*

It is not all men who could speak these words to God; the wicked and the worldly-minded could not use such language without blasphemy. It is the godly, and they only, who can dare to use the language of our text,

and even they must do so with a certain limitation. Nothing that is evil in any of God's people is in any way His work. It is only their *good* works of which it can be truly said, "God wrought them;" and of these it may be said, God wrought not some only, but *all* of them.

I. THE DOCTRINE WHICH OUR TEXT CONTAINS. Man is by nature a creature so depraved that he is "unto every good work reprobate." God looks into his heart, and seeing evil motives even in his best performances, pronounces "all his righteousnesses 'filthy rags.'" Where things are not done to please God, He is *displeased.* No matter what show the unregenerate make before their fellow-sinners, God turns away His face from them, and counts them even "dead in trespasses and sins," whilst *men*, perhaps, are holding them in admiration (Article xiii.; Luke xvi. 15; Rom. viii. 7, 8). When, therefore, a man *does* begin to please God, it is because God hath "wrought him for this self-same thing" by the mighty working of His power (Eph. ii. 4, 5; Phil. ii. 13). In these passages, the earliest beginning of any good work in us is ascribed wholly to the Lord (Article x.) The Holy Spirit is the author of all good in man from first to last. "From Him all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." *Repentance* is *His* Work. "Godly sorrow" is no natural emotion (Acts. v. 31; xi. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 25). So also is *faith* (1 Cor. xii. 3). So, again, is all *holiness* of heart and life (Eph. ii. 10; Prov. xvi. 1; Gal. vi. 22, 23). All excellences in man are "fruits of the *Spirit.*" Such is the doctrine of our text. Consider,—

II. THE FEELINGS WHICH GOD'S PEOPLE OUGHT TO ENTERTAIN WHEN THEY REFLECT UPON IT. Is it true that God hath wrought all our works in us? What a ground there is here, then,—1, for **humility.** Surely "boasting is excluded." Pride is an absurdity (1 Cor. iv. 7; xv. 10.) 2, for **thankfulness.** Solomon was full of wonder and amazement that God should condescend to come and dwell within his costly temple. Should not the Lord's people be still more gratefully amazed that He should make a temple of their hearts! 3, for **encouragement** (Phil. i. 6). Let the believer look at the very construction of our text, let him read it in connection with the words which go before, and he will see what a comfortable argument is drawn from it: "Lord, Thou *wilt* ordain peace for us, *for* Thou also hast wrought all our works in us." The presence of His grace within our bosoms is a token of the favour which He means to show us. He who put oil into our lamp and set it burning, and then said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," will never omit to feed the celestial flame.—*A. Roberts, M.A.: Plain Sermons, Second Series*, vol. i. 21–30.

SPIRITUAL USURPERS RENOUNCED.

xxvi. 13, 14. *O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us, &c.*

We have in this language—

I. A PENITENTIAL CONFESSION. "Other lords," &c. Exegetically the point to be determined is whether the "other lords" who "have ruled over us," are the king and people of Babylon or idol gods; the former with coercion, the latter with their own wicked consent? Perhaps both ideas are included and a sad sequence implied. They had wandered of their own wicked will into the service of pagan gods, and now against their will were forced to serve pagan kings. Paganism had led to vice; vice had destroyed all true manliness. Heroism in Jewish history had lived only so long as fidelity to Jehovah had lasted. Piety having decayed, heroism was dead; they could not stand before their invaders.

Paganism had enslaved them. This they now feel, and hate Paganism, and shun it more thoroughly than ever before.

II. A HOLY RESOLVE, involving, 1. *A recognition of Divine claims.* It is right that we should consecrate our services to Thee. By Thee created and sustained, it is robbery to carry our services elsewhere. Thou art our Father, and to honour others instead of Thee is unfilial ingratitude. Our King Thou art, and not to serve Thee is sedition. 2. *A consciousness of dependence on Divine help.* "But by Thee only," &c., *i.e.*, "Only by Thy Divine help can we hope to be faithful to Thee." Here is a renunciation, not only of heathenism, but also of all self-sufficiency. By sad experience they have learnt that without God they can do nothing.

III. A SHOUT OF VICTORY (vers. 14). The struggle against sin may be severe and long. Bad habits are not easily overcome. But divine help gives victory to human endeavours. He who uttered the almost despairing cry, "O wretched man that I am," &c., can now give the victorious shout, "I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ." There are those who once served mammon, and bowed to ambition; who followed the Moloch of revenge and hate; slaves to drunkenness and nameless vices, who now through Divine grace can say of these bad habits, "They are dead . . . Thou hast visited and destroyed them," &c.—*W. Parkes.*

Man is a responsible being. To say he is responsible to himself is to say nothing more than that he claims to act according to his own inclination. Responsibility has regard to another. Lordship from without is exercised over every human soul. Good and evil—God and Satan—contend for the dominion. Evil usurps the dominion until an inward revolution occurs. Thus the Jewish people had cast off the authority of Jehovah, and placed themselves under the dominion of other Gods. The captivity in Babylon converted them from this folly. They then determined that thenceforward they would only "make mention of," celebrate and honour, give the dominion to the Lord their God. Here is a penitential confession and a good resolution.

I. A PENITENTIAL CONFESSION. "Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us." The dominion of evil in human souls is: 1. *Multiform.* It assumes many shapes. The gods the Jewish people served were numerous as the nations under whose influence they fell. So the form of evil most congenial to a man's own nature is sure to assail him (H. E. I. 4679–4683). Not only so; while each has probably his special besetment, each has also multitudinous besetments (H. E. I. 4550, 4551). The penitent sees that his sins pass all power of numeration or recollection; they have become lords and masters (Rom. vi. 16; H. E. I. 4482–4484). 2. *Wrongful.* "Other lords beside Thee." The language implies that God ought to have had the dominion. Then it must be wrong to give it to others. He is the rightful sovereign on every ground. Nor can he divide His throne with any rival. As it is impossible to serve two masters whose interests are opposed to each other, or to adhere to two claimants of the same crown, so is it to make mention of the name of God and at the same time to submit to the dominion of other lords. But we have attempted this. "Will a man rob God?" Yes. Men who would not wrong each other will defraud God daily without compunction and without shame. To allow the dominion of other lords is a wrong done to God. 3. *Voluntary.* It has been entirely with our own consent. Those who make this confession mean that they have been blamable for the wrongful dominion of other lords. Freedom is essential to responsibility. We have consented to sin—loved it. Nor does it avail to say we are unable to break from its power. If unable, what has brought our moral nature into such a state of imbecility? Are not its chains wound round our nature by our own consent? Is not the wretched victim of intemperance re-

sponsible for his inability to resist the cup, when that inability is the result of the voluntary indulgence of years? The fetters of the sinner have been forged by himself. The criminality reaches farther back than the present sin; to the sins freely chosen long ago, which have led up to the present power of sin over the will. If the will is in bondage to sin, it was, in the first instance, voluntarily surrendered. *Now* the penitent sinner sees all this. He comes with lowly submission and penitential confession.

II. A GOOD RESOLUTION. "By Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." The confession of the ransomed Jews meant more than empty words. They had seen their error; they intended a complete change, a radical reformation. Idolatry was for ever renounced.

This is a type of the conversion of a sinner. The confession means not only that he seeks forgiveness, but also—1, *Intends reformation*—abandonment of all sin, no reservation of any sin, the course of life completely altered. 2, *Supposes regeneration.* Man can only see the outward change; but what does it represent? Awakening to the danger, sight of the evil of sin. The disposition is different; the heart is changed. Hence the will determines the other way. 3, *Proceeds from God.* There is a work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. We need His help to fulfil the resolution. "By Thee only."

Have you experienced this change? It is a personal one. Whether you have or not, He is the Lord—your Lord; therefore right that He demands your service. O yield His claim!—*J. Rawlinson.*

PRAYER IN TROUBLE.

xxvi. 16. "*Lord, in trouble,*" &c.

Every man knows what trouble is; what it is to lie under the chastening hand of God. In the day of trouble, we feel our dependence on external help. Some in adversity seek friends whom they neglect in prosperity. Happy is he who, when trouble comes, finds himself surrounded by true friends. Acquire the art of keeping your friends. But there are troubles to which human sympathy and help are inadequate. Times when men's thoughts drift towards God. Trouble reminds us of the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal. It quickens the spiritual sense by casting the fierce light of eternity on the things of time. Men visit God in trouble by pouring out to Him their prayers.

I. **Some pray in trouble, who are prayerless at other times.** Multitudes live entirely without prayer. Taught by mothers in infancy. For a considerable part of ripening youth they maintained the habit. But began to neglect, were afraid of ridicule, or fell into sinful indulgence; it would appal them to think how long it is since they poured out one prayer to God. Surprising that with God so near, so many should habitually turn away and never seek His face. But some heavy trouble comes. They pause, recollect themselves, remember the long years of misspent time, pray, promise, and vow (H. E. I., 69).

Does this always continue when the trouble has departed? Is not this often the history? The cloud breaks, the sun bursts out again, the man forgets that the sun was ever hid. Ship in storm. Cries, prayers, vows. Ship is saved. Prayers cease; revelry is resumed. How often on the bed of sickness are prayers and promises uttered which are forgotten with returning health. Pharaoh alarmed by the successive plagues. Besought Moses to pray. Hardened his heart again. The children of Israel repeatedly fell into idolatry. Visited with judgments. Cried to the Lord. When punishment was withdrawn returned to the sin. Conviction is not conversion; awakening not repentance. If the heart remains unchanged, a man will only pray

as long as he is alarmed (H. E. I., 3877–3879.)

II. **Some begin to pray in trouble, and continue to pray afterwards.** Many have had to thank God for trouble. Borne along the stream of prosperity towards destruction. Some obstruction. It was unwelcome. It compelled examination. It revealed the yawning falls a little way beyond. Just in time to return. Every human soul requires one such grand interruption of its career. Grace of God employs various means for its effectuation. Trouble is one (Hosea v. 15). The soul's deep sin, danger, need, has been revealed. The cry has gone up to heaven. It was the cry of true repentance and humble faith in the Crucified One. Comes from the trouble a new man—a praying man (Manasseh, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10–13. The prodigal son, Luke xv. 14–21).

III. **Some pray habitually, but especially in trouble.** Prayer is the special characteristic of a Christian. It is his "vital breath." He cannot fail to establish stated seasons of prayer, both public and private. He endeavours to maintain the spirit of prayer. By its aid the blood of the spiritual life is kept in circulation. An important sense in which he prays "without ceasing" (H. E. I., 3866–3879; P. D., 2839). And every remarkable event is made the occasion of special prayer. Certainly trouble is one of these. Do you not go to God in your sorrows, as a child goes to his father or his mother? Bishop Reynolds says: "A godly heart is like those flowers which shut when the sun sets, and open again when the sun returns and shines upon them. Hannah prayed silently so long as she was in bitterness of spirit; but as soon as God answered her prayer and filled her heart with joy, presently her mouth was enlarged into a song of thanksgiving." In trouble you pray, 1. for deliverance, in submission to the Divine will. 2. More especially for a sanctified use of trouble; complete submission, faith, purification (Phil. iv. 6, 7).—*J. Rawlinson.*

National Revival.

xxvi. 19. *Thy dead men shall live.*

I. **This is the language of exultation.** (*a.*) In this part of the chapter the tone changes from sorrow, failure, and abortion to life, prosperity, and joy. "Thy dead, O Zion, shall live again." Thy people have been virtually, civilly, nationally dead, but they shall have a resurrection. Because these dead are God's people, their resurrection from national death is certain. Then, thrilled with confidence in this truth, the prophet gives utterance to the voice of God within him, "Awake and sing, ye that lie buried in dust, awake; come forth from your (figurative) graves, and break out in song as ye come up to the light of day!"

II. **This expression involves a contrast.** The resurrection of national life of God's people stands in contrast with the denial of resurrection to the wicked rulers of Babylon (ver. 14). That Chaldean nation went down to its political grave with no hope, no possibility of being raised to national life again. On the contrary, God's people, from being in a state of national death in Babylon, were eventually called into national life.

III. **This declaration suggests a truth which nations ought to learn.** No nation that seeks God and His righteousness can be permanently kept down. "Righteousness exalteth a nation;" exalteth it from depression into power. It may be brought low, but if the elements of rectitude lie within it, if public justice be a part of its political creed, and respect for the rights of others its unvarying practice, then, though apparently buried in the grave of defeat and degradation, its resurrection shall come.

God rules not only amid the armies of heaven, but amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and to every nation maintaining justice, mercy, and truth, though brought ever so low, the voice of history proclaims, "Thy dead men shall live!" The bodies of English martyrs in the Tudor period perished. Under the Stuart dynasty the bones of those English patriots who defied "crowned and mitred tyranny" were dug up and dishonoured. That part of them corruptible and worthless died, but the better part of them has experienced a resurrection. Their principles live to-day. "Thy dead men shall live."—*Henry Cowles, D.D.*

(a.) This passage proves beyond a question that the idea of a resurrection from the dead was familiar to the prophet and to his first readers, for whose immediate use he wrote. Sensible writers never borrow figures from things unknown, but always from things better known than the facts they would illustrate. As no writer *could* draw a figure from what was unknown to himself, so, if he sought to teach, he *would* not draw one from what was unknown to his readers. As Isaiah could not talk about a resurrection if he had never known the idea and the words to express it, so he would not expect to be understood unless his readers were also familiar with it.—*Cowles.*

God's Invitation to Shelter.

(*For a Time of National Distress.*)

xxvi. 20. *Come, my people, &c.*

The history of humanity as a whole, and of nations and communities as a part, is like that of individual man, diversified and varying, made up of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow. There is a "but" in every condition, a crook in every lot. The people of God, however, have alleviations which the world knows not of. They have promises of present comfort and help, hopes of future recompense, and they are invited to make God their Refuge now. This was very much the case with the captive Jews in Babylon. Wars and commotions would rage as a tempest around Babylon, and bring its overthrow. But while the storm raged, the people of God were to be calm and tranquil; were to enter into their places of retirement, and avoid the commotions of war. This passage is a word in season to God's people now.

I. The persons invited. "My people." This was addressed to the Jews, who stood in a peculiar relation to God. It has now a wider range. It may include—1. *Those who are His by profession.* This includes a large portion of the people of this land. Many of these, however, are out of Christ, and they are specially invited to repair to Him as their complete and only refuge from the storms of conscience and the righteous displeasure of a Holy God. 2. *Those who are His by personal consecration.* Not only received into the visible Church by an outward profession, but have become living members of that mystical body of which Christ is the Head. In times of danger and distress, when the judgments of God are in the earth, they are invited to repair to Christ. He is a complete refuge from every storm.

II. The duty enjoined. 1. *The form of the injunction.* No terrible threatening, but mild and compassionate invitation. Though our Redeemer and Master has a right to command, yet He more frequently employs the language of invitation. 2. *The place of retreat.* We may think of many sacred localities to which we may repair in the time of national or individual sorrow. There is the open *sanctuary.* This to many is a place of refuge and comfort. There is the *home.* Families may meet and together commune with God. There is the *private closet.* There we may humble ourselves, mourn our own faults and those of others, and seek God's favour. But after we have thought of all these places we must go much further, into a more mysterious and safer sanctuary. These are only the *way* to the City of Refuge; only the *plank* by which we may ascend to the Ark; only the *door-way* into the

Temple. Ours must be the language of the Apostle (John vi. 68). 3. *The purpose of retirement.* For defence. Israel must remain within the blood-sprinkled doors while the destroying angel wields his sword outside. Rahab and her family abide within their dwelling while Jericho is destroyed. Amid the tokens of danger and the coming storm, we are to hide ourselves in the perfections of God, in the merits of Christ. We must enter into the ark, and like Noah expect the Lord to shut us in. When the Hebrews had sprinkled the blood of the Paschal lamb, the command was, "None of you shall go out of his house till the morning." The manslayer could not go within the City of Refuge. Here in Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is safety from every danger, a complete Refuge in every time of need.

CONCLUSION.—The whole of this year has been marked more or less by personal, relative, or national calamity. It opened in storm, and a fine ship, the *London*, perished. Pestilence among the cattle followed. War broke out and mercantile prosperity waned. Now a painful visitation is among us. God is now calling you to Himself.—*George Smith, D.D., August 9, 1866.*

CHAMBERS OF SAFETY.

xxvi. 20. *Enter into thy chambers, &c.*

The religion of Christ, as a religion of consolation, is eminently suited to the condition of men in a sinful, suffering, and dying world. The same Saviour who died to save, lives to bless, saying, "*Lo, I am with you always,*" &c. The same Holy Spirit sanctifies and comforts. This Scripture suggests, that in the worst of storms God's people have a secure hiding-place.

I. A CONSOLATORY TRUTH IMPLIED. God's people have chambers of security and defence in time of danger. Every perfection of the divine character, every office of Christ, every divine promise is a chamber of defence (Prov. xviii. 10).

II. A WELCOME DUTY ENJOINED. "Enter," &c. 1. *Who gives this invitation?* The Lord Jehovah, with whom is Everlasting Strength. 2. *To whom this invitation is given,* "My people." Not Babylon, not Egypt, but "my people." 3. *What it is to which He calls them.* To enter their closets, hold communion with Him, trust themselves to His keeping.

III. THE REASONS FOR THIS RETREAT. 1. *Because the calamity anticipated is very great.* God comes out of His place to judge the nations, &c. 2. *The season of danger is short.* "For a little moment." Self-sacrifice and self-restraint for Christ's sake will not last long. 3. *Because the blessings promised are very valuable.* Present purity and peace, future glory, &c.—*Samuel Thodey.*

RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT.

xxvi. 20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee.*

An exhortation to religious retirement. Man was intended for society, but also for contemplation. When devoted to pious purposes, retirement is highly useful to man and most acceptable to God (H. E. I., 3466–3525). It is commended to us both by precept and example (Gen. xxiv. 63; Matt. xiv. 23, &c.) But the retreat which the Scriptures commend is temporary, not total; not that of a monk to his cell, in which he passes his days in barren and unprofitable speculation, but that of men living in the world, who go out of it for a time in order that they may return to it better fitted for the duties which God has assigned them there. That you may be stimulated to this duty, consider its advantages.

I. Religious retirement takes off the impression which the neighbourhood of evil example has a tendency to make upon the mind. We need often to escape from it in order that we may see its true character, and renew our strength to resist it.

II. Religious retirement is favourable for fixing pious purposes in the mind, and strengthening our habits of virtue. Dazzled no longer by the false glitter of the world, we open our eyes to the beauties of the better country; stunned no more with the noise of folly, we can listen in silence to the still small voice. At leisure we can reflect by what temptations we were formerly foiled, that we may guard against them in time to come; for seeing the evil day, we can prepare ourselves for its conflicts.

III. In religious retirement we attain to self-knowledge. Here wisdom begins. We can never ascend to the knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal, without knowing ourselves; and we can never know ourselves without retiring from the world, without stripping off whatever is artificial about us, without throwing off the veil which we wear before men, and devoting our sacred hours to serious consideration.

IV. Retirement and meditation will open up a source of new and better entertainment than you meet with in the world (Ps. civ. 34).—*John Logan: Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 156–164.

God's Goodness to the Church.

xxvii. 2, 3. *In that day sing ye unto her*, &c. (a.)

The Church a vineyard: a spot set apart: weeds taken out; choice trees planted; supplied with means; fruitful of "red wine," the best (Prov. xxxiii. 31).

I. God's care of His Church. 1. It is *constant*, "night and day." 2. It is *all-sufficient*. "I, the Lord, do keep it"—what Omniscience and Omnipotence guards, none can hurt.

II. God's ministry to the Church. Not only does He guard it from external assault, He ministers to its internal necessities. "I will water it." God's influence upon His Church is—1. *Adapted to its wants*. The vine needs moisture. 2. *It is a continued blessing*. "Every moment." 3. *It is followed by blessed results:* Growth, fragrance, beauty, fruitfulness.

Application.—1. How secure is the true Church of God (H. E. I., 1246–1251; 2449). 2. How important to belong to it. 3. How great are its obligations to God. 4. How zealous we ought to be for its extension.—*British and Foreign Pulpit*, i. 74, 75.

(a.) *Cowles* only follows *Alexander* in the rendering of these verses. *Birks* translates: "In that day sing ye unto her. A vineyard of choice wine!" &c. *Cheyne:* "In that day—a pleasant vineyard—sing ye of it. I, Jehovah, its keeper—moment by moment I water it; lest any should invade it, by night and by day I keep it." *Kay:* "Sing ye unto her."

A Solemn Disclaimer.

xxvii. 4, 5. *Fury is not in me*, &c.

The figurative language in ver. 1 sets forth some powerful and terrible enemies of Israel—cruel, crafty, and bloodthirsty oppressors. But, terrible as they were to Israel, they were no more than "briers and thorns" in the way of Israel's God. He would "march against them and go through them," just as soldiers on their march tread down and crush so frail a barrier as these would be against them. His own people the while should be the object of His special and necessary care (vers. 2, 3). And if they should so offend as to draw down His judgments upon them, still He would not

deal with them as adversaries. He would be ready to make peace with them again on their humbling themselves before Him. The solemn disclaimer of our text should be borne in mind by us when we study—

I. GOD'S THREATENINGS AGAINST THE WICKED. Many of these are very terrible, and a certain class of religionists would have us believe that these alarming texts of Holy Scripture are metaphors that mean nothing, and that we dishonour "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" if we associate His name with anything that savours of wrath, vengeance, and severity. But this is taking a meagre and one-sided view of the Divine character. In God there is not only love, but also holiness, which "cannot look upon iniquity;" justice, which "will by no means clear the guilty;" and truth, which forewarns and will not fail to punish the transgressors of law and order. Let us not mistake the character of such punishment. A furious man acts on the passionate impulse of the moment. He strikes blindly and without consideration; does many things which, when the excitement is over, he will be sorry for and try to undo. But nothing like this is there with God. His threatenings are not uttered in blind and inconsiderate wrath, but in awful calmness of judgment, and in vindication of His essential and eternal holiness; and thus, too, they will be executed. This it is that will make the judgment-day so awful, and that then will reduce the condemned to despair. The son who sees his father's anger so stirred against him, that vain attempt were it to reason with him, vain to offer a word of explanation or excuse, does well to keep out of his father's way, and hope for a better time to stand before him and ask to be forgiven. But no such hope is there, when the offender sees that his aggrieved parent—not furiously, but "of very faithfulness"—is about to administer a threatened punishment; ay, and that his heart is heavy, and his eye dim with tears, even while he punishes! And this, allowing for the inevitable weakness of any illustration of such a matter, may serve to convey the idea which I would impress upon you. "The Father of mercies and God of all comfort" will certainly execute His threatenings against impenitent transgressors. Not in passionate haste, not on sudden impulse of which He might afterwards repent, will the Lord make "a way for His anger" against sin.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT. Not a few earnest men becloud and all but explain away this fundamental doctrine, because (they tell us) they cannot endure the thought of sin being punished in the person of the Sinless One. They do not like to hear of the Father's "wrath" being averted and (as it is said) "appeased" by the death of His Son; of God looking out (as it were) for a victim, and fastening upon the One found guiltless as a substitute for the guilty mass! But this mistaken representation arises from attributing to God a passion which in men would be indignation and wrath. But what does our text say? "*Fury* is not in *Me*." We may not think of our heavenly Father as an angry Being, furiously raging against those whom the devil has proved too strong for, and not to be appeased till He found a victim on which to wreak His vengeance! But no unwillingness on our part to hear it can alter that which is written (2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. iv. 18; Isa. liii. 5, 6). If we study this great subject aright, we shall find in the Atonement the result of the co-working of the calmest (and therefore most inflexible) justice and the tenderest love.—*T. W. Peile, D.D.: Sermons*, pp. 101–112.

The text expresses the preference of God for forgiveness rather than for punishment, and the conditions of that forgiveness; but, at the same time, the utter overthrow of all who continue in opposition to His will. It suggests—

I. A blessed absence in the nature of God. "Fury is not in me." Fury seems to be *uncontrolled* and *uncontroll-*

able anger, such as that with which the storm seems to beat upon the dismasted, helmless vessel; such as that which inspires the hungry lion that has been for some hours disappointed of its prey. When a man is so under the influence of anger that no consideration from within or intercession from without can pacify him, he is in a state of *fury*. But no such state is possible to our God. His anger is always under control, He is always the Lord God, abundant in goodness and truth; and we have also plentiful evidence that, in the height of His displeasure, He is accessible to intercession on behalf of His creatures. See how the Son of God ends His woes against "Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites," with "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered," &c. Recall the effect of Abram's pleading for Sodom, and that of Moses for unbelieving Israel (Num. xiv.) The declaration of the text has been abundantly verified in all ages. Nevertheless,

II. This blessed absence in the nature of God is compatible with contention with the unrepenting. "Who would set the briers," &c. Imagine a father and a son at variance, the father being in the right, and the son in the wrong. There are two ways of reconciliation: either the son must comply with the conditions of the father, or the father must lower his standard to the level of the son. But what a wrong would the father do himself, his family, and society, if he were to adopt this course! He ought not, will not. If the son resolves to fight it out, reconciliation is impossible. This is the relative position of God and the ungodly man. God says, "I am Jehovah, I change not." It is a blessed impossibility. But the unrepentant man ought, can, must! If not, the fire of goodness must be set against the briers of wickedness, a contest as hopeless, and of which the issue is as certain, as that of the devouring flame with briers and thorns.

Conclusion.—The absence of fury in God leads Him to prefer pardon to punishment, and to provide means for the former. "Let him take hold of my strength," &c. Men, churches, and nations are lovers of peace in proportion as they are righteous (Ps. lxxii. 3). The preference of God for peace depends upon the very attribute of which the ungodly would rob Him, His righteousness. What is God's strength? How take hold of it? When a man falls overboard at sea, the appointed means of rescue is the life-belt which is thrown to him. Seizing that, he lays hold of the strength of the vessel to save him. When the man-slayer, fleeing from the avenger of blood, entered the city of refuge, He took hold of God's appointed means of shelter. God's strength is His pardoning prerogative, exercised to us through Christ, the "arm" or "strength" of the Lord. See how Moses takes hold of it (Num. xiv. 19). And the prodigal (Luke xv. 21; Rom. v. 1).—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

TAKING HOLD OF GOD'S STRENGTH.

xxvii. 5. *Or let him take hold of My strength*, &c. (α)

I. IN WHAT GOD'S STRENGTH CONSISTS. First, we think of Almightiness, that irresistible power which created the world, &c. We are apt to forget those other and higher sources of strength which belong to God (1 Kings xix. 12). Wisdom is strength (Eccles. ix. 15, 16). Truthfulness is strength. Justice is power. Mercy to the weak is often the manifestation of the highest strength. England has often put forth her power; her soldiers have crushed the most appalling rebellions; her guns have sunk the mightiest navies; but history will perhaps record it as the highest display of her power when, under a sense of justice, she withdrew her forces when she might have crushed her foes (as in the late Transvaal war,

1881). Now, this element of mercy, as manifest in the work of Christ, is God's strength (Rom. i. 16; 1 Cor. i. 24). God's fatherly love is the essence of His power (H. E. I., 3206). Christ is the expression of that love. Christ is God's strength. "And let him take hold of My strength."

II. HOW MAY MAN TAKE HOLD OF GOD'S STRENGTH? (1.) By *submission*. (Rom. vi. 13; Ps. ii. 10). As nothing is so reasonable, so nothing is so wise as submission to God. (2.) By *prayer*. Prayer is the hand of the child stretching out in the dark and anxious to feel itself under that father's protecting power. Prayer takes hold of God's strength. (3.) By *obedience* (1 Pet. i. 14). When Saul of Tarsus, after asking, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" went straightway and did God's will, then there came to him a moral power mightier than he had ever wielded before. (4.) By *implicit trust in God's mercy* (β).

III. THE RESULT OF THUS TAKING HOLD OF GOD'S STRENGTH. The result is that Divine strength is infused into our minds. We become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Trust is the medium through which God's power is transmitted to man's weakness (Heb. vi. 19). We can only really know those whom we love and trust (Dan. xi. 32). The most invincible and lasting institution in the world is the Church of Christ, because composed of those who are "partakers of the Divine nature," and whom God has made strong.—*William Parkes, F.R.G.S.*

(α.) *Cheyne* translates and comments: "*Or else.* . . . A truly evangelical belief that God is willing to be reconciled even to His enemies. . . . *Seize upon my fortress*—Let him take sanctuary in the Name of Jehovah (Prov. xviii. 10); in short, let him become a believing servant of Jehovah. '*Fortress*,' a symbolical name for a protecting deity, as xvii. 10, Ps. lii. 7 (9)." *Kay:* "Or, 'Let a man lay hold of My strong refuge;' let him flee to my altar of reconciliation (cf. 1 Kings i. 50)."

(β.) "I think I can convey the meaning of this passage so that every one may understand it, by what took place in my own family within these few days. One of my children committed a fault for which I thought it to be my duty to chastise him. I called him to me, explained to him the evil of what he had done, and told him how grieved I was that I must punish him for it. He heard me in silence, then rushed into my arms, and burst into tears. I could sooner have cut off my arm than have then struck him for his fault; he had taken hold of my strength—he had made peace with me."—*Toller.*

THE FUTURE PROSPERITY OF ISRAEL.

XXVII. 6. *He shall cause them*, &c. (α.)

It did not often happen to ancient nations to rise into new vigour after being conquered and removed. Ancient Assyria and Babylon fell, and their influence faded. But it was otherwise with Israel. They had flourished; abused their trust; were punished by being conquered and removed. But they did not perish. From the Babylonian grave they rose. Centuries longer they existed, until their crowning sin. No further need for their national existence. It ceased. But their separate identity as a race continued. The Jew is everywhere. Everywhere he is a witness to the truth of the Bible. And the *influence* of the Jewish people continues. The influence of the classic writers of Greece and Rome continues. Their study is essential to a liberal education. But only the few enjoy that advantage. The literature of the Jewish race was confined almost entirely to their sacred books. But how wide its influence! Read by the scholar and the peasant, &c. Lifts men's thoughts above the level of this world, and presents a loftier ideal of human character than any of the mere "thinkers" of ancient or modern times.

Nor is it only the perpetuation and influence of a literature. It is the perpetuation of a type of moral life. One who came of Jacob has exerted and is exerting an influence never equalled. Born in a manger, trained in poverty, dying on a cross, He has been and is

the fountain of spiritual life to millions. In Him they have become a new seed of Jacob (Gal. iii. 29).

The text foretells the stability, the growth, and the diffusion of the Church.

I. ITS STABILITY. "*Take root.*" This is necessary to *growth*. And *life* is necessary to *it*. You may plant a stone, or a piece of dried wood, but it can never take root. Why? It wants the mysterious principle called life. Reasons for this. And the roots are the firmest part of the plant. Hence the metaphor—a man is rooted in his position. Fine forest-tree with roots, like arms, many feet on every side. Impossible to dislodge that tree. This is one of the emblems of the stability of the Christian's spiritual position (Col. ii. 7). Thus the stability of the Church, the aggregate of spiritual men, is set forth in the text. It has struck its roots so deep, and spread them so far, that, as hitherto, so in the future, it shall continue. Storms of opposition, persecution, infidelity unable to uproot it. "The gates of hell shall not prevail."

II. ITS GROWTH. Rooting of a tree only valuable in relation to its continued life and growth. Change is the law of life. Look at it in the individual member of the spiritual Israel. In the living tree in spring the bud breaks forth, then the beautiful blossom —promise of the fruit. So in the Christian life. Gradually it develops by a certain though irregular progression. Nor will this promise of fruitfulness be falsified (Gal. v. 22, 23; Rom. vi. 22; Ps. xcii. 13, 14; H. E. I., 2508–2516, 2538–2544). Multiply this by the number of living members in any Church, and how much of spiritual goodness and beauty will be in that circle! Not only within it, but in the homes, among the neighbours, over the whole sphere of their influence. Then multiply this by all the Churches. What an amount of moral beauty thus in the world!

III. ITS DIFFUSION. "*And fill the face of the world with fruit.*" This vision was always present to the prophet's eye. Suppose it realised, and the whole world converted. Then the world will be filled with goodness. But it is all in the spiritual succession from Jacob. How much comes of little! So it has ever been; small beginnings, gradual growth, great endings.

Do you say you cannot believe in the world's conversion? Do you believe the harvest comes from the seed? That Jesus multiplied the loaves? Is anything too hard for the Lord?—*J. Rawlinson.*

(a.) Note the translation of this verse by Alexander and Delitzsch, in which Kay, Birks, and Cheyne concur.

THE DAY OF THE EAST WIND.

xxvii. 8. *In measure, when Thou sendest it forth, &c.* (*Margin*).

We have often complained of the bitterness and depressing effects of the "east wind." In Bible lands it was scorching and destructive (Job xviii. 17; xxvii. 21; Gen. xli. 6). Israel is represented in this chapter as a vineyard, of which God was the proprietor and guardian (ver. 3). The removal of the people to Babylon seemed to contradict this declaration. They presented the appearance of a vineyard uncared for, forsaken, neglected, and spoiled. The east wind, sweeping over it, marred its beauty and checked its growth, and its desolation seemed complete. The question arises, Does God really mean what He says when He engages to keep His vineyard with continued care? In reply to this question the prophet speaks here. He justifies the ways of God to men, explaining the Divine procedure, and showing the purpose of that afflictive dispensation which He visited upon His beloved vineyard. What a consoling subject, then, is here presented,—the trials of the godly (1), in their

severity, and (2), in their mitigation.

I. THE SEVERITY OF CHRISTIAN TRIAL. Our seasons of sharp distress and loss are fitly set forth as "*the day of the east wind*," biting and piercing, when the heart is joyless and depressed. God, who sends it, means us to feel its keenness. The severity of our trials appears—1. *In the time when they overtake us.* The east wind prevails with us in the early spring. So in our experience of life, when all is full of fair promise, our hopes are blasted. A young and tender faith is often sorely tested. We would push adversity into old age, with youth as a course of uninterrupted joy; but at the most unlikely periods the day of the east wind sweeps over us. 2. *In their violence.* The wind of adversity seems to us cruel and devastating. We speak of a reverse or bereavement as "a sad blow." 3. *In their continuance.* We could tolerate an occasional day of east wind, but when it blows persistently for weeks, we begin to grumble. Afflictions sometimes follow each other in rapid succession. The night of weeping is long and dark, and it seems as if the morning of joy would never break (H. E. I., 52, 53). 4. Because of *the aspect in which God appears to us when we are under them.* He seems to be contending, "debating" with us, to be opposed to us. This gives the keenest poignancy to our griefs. How unworthy, often, is the view we form of God's character in the day of the east wind, charging Him with partiality and injustice. Of all ingredients that embitter the cup of suffering, this is the most bitter, but it is an ingredient which the sufferer puts in with his own hand. As in time of east winds weak and cheerless people fall into dull, moody fits, the sighing breezes chiming in with the dull music of their own spirits, so in the day of adversity the soul sometimes loses its sense of the Divine love.

II. THE MITIGATING, ALLEVIATING CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. The day of the east wind is *well timed.* It blows at the right season, in the early spring. It may nip a few opening buds, but if it did not come out then, it would retard vegetation to a fatal extent afterwards. The youth may complain of his hard struggle, but it nurses a manly character. 2. Trial is *limited in its duration.* The east wind does not blow all the year round. These cold blasts usher in the spring. 3. *God moderates its severity.* "In measure" (1 Cor. x. 13). Sorrow is nicely adjusted to the heart on which it falls (H. E. I., 187, 188). 4. The following verse suggests a further alleviation, viz.:—*The gracious purpose accomplished by trial,* to purge iniquity, and take away sin. God appoints our sorrow for the uprooting of our sin. The physician finds it necessary to adopt sharp measures, but his operation is wise and kind. A proneness to idolatry was Israel's sin, and, to check this, the nation is sent into exile. Though He removed it with "His rough wind in the day of His east wind," the fruit or effect was to uproot a besetting sin (H. E. I., 85–89, 116, 211). 5. Another mitigating circumstance is found in verse 7. *God makes a distinction between His people and the world.* Great as Israel's sufferings were, the judgments which descended on their enemies were far more terrible, not corrective, but destructive (1 Cor. xi. 32). The surly blasts of the east wind may howl and chafe and spend their rage on God's vineyard, but they are only the last remnants of the dreary winter. To those who are in covenant with God every wind that blows is charged with blessing (H. E. I., 108).

CONCLUDING REMARKS. 1. When the east wind of trial begins to blow upon us, let us hasten, not to blame God, but to examine and blame ourselves. Though trials are not always punitive, or even corrective, they are very frequently so; and in our case, as in that of Israel, the reason why the east wind is blowing probably is because there is iniquity in us that needs to be purged away (ver. 8; H. E. I., 114). 2. When the east wind

is blowing upon us, instead of murmuring let us recall the mitigating circumstances of which I have reminded you, and let us thank God that He loves us too much to leave us under the power of iniquity (Heb. xii. 5–10; H. E. I., 162–165).—*William Guthrie, M.A.*

THE AFFLICTIONS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

xxvii. 7–9. *Hath He smitten him as He smote his smiter, or was he slain as his slayers were slain? In exact measure, when dismissing her, Thou didst contend with her; He scared her away with His rough blast in the day of the east wind. Therefore on these terms* [or, hereby] *shall the guilt of Jacob be purged, and this shall be all the fruit of taking away his sin, when he maketh all the altar-stones like lime-stones dashed in pieces, that Asherahs and sun-images rise up no more.—Cheyne.*

This is a continuation of the song of the vineyard (vers. 2–6). That song was to be sung after deliverance from disasters which had come upon God's chosen people, as the chastisement of their sins. The prophet here pauses to reflect and to instruct them. His instructions are of exceeding value to us, for God acts on the same principles in every age.

I. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE OFTEN SEVERELY AFFLICTED.

They fail in duty, or they even transgress His commandments. Then they certainly suffer. Utter is the delusion that *they* may sin with impunity. Unlike human parents, God never spoils His children; He has no foolish fondness for them that would lead Him to be blind to or tolerant of their faults. On the contrary, sin in them is most grievous to Him (H. E. I., 4563–4570), and the chastisement thereof is certain and often severe (Amos iii. 2). Terrible was the punishment which Isaiah foresaw would come upon Israel—deportation to the land of their conquerors. In that calamity what varied and awful sufferings were involved! So it is still! there is severity as well as mercy in the God we serve. Because He loves us, He will not allow us to go on to ruin unchecked. By terrible calamities, if need be, He will arrest us in the path to perdition.

II. IN THE SEVEREST AFFLICTIONS WHEREWITH GOD VISITS HIS PEOPLE HIS MERCY IS MANIFEST.

Manifest, 1. **In the fact that they befall them here and now.** How kind in Him, not to stand silently by, and leave them to go on unchecked to ruin! Remember, the sinner has no claim upon the mercy of God in any form. 2. **In the restraint with which they are measured out** (α.) There is no passion or vindictiveness in God's dealings with them that provoke Him to anger. Though His chastisements may seem to burst upon the backslider like a hurricane of east wind, in reality mercy controls and directs the storm. "In exact measure," &c., (β.) Because it is so exactly measured out by mercy, (1) *it always falls short of the guilt of the sinner.* Did justice measure it out, so that it should be commensurate with the guilt of the transgressor, it would mean destruction. This is seen in the case of the enemies of God. Persistent ungodliness is visited at length, not with chastisement, but with judgment, *i.e.*, utter ruin (note the picture of the doom of Babylon in verses 10, 11). So that when God's erring people have been chastened most severely, His prophets can put to them Isaiah's question in verse 7. To it they can only return the answer given in Ps. ciii. 10. (2). *It always falls short of the transgressor's power of endurance* (H. E. I., 180, 187). When it is ended, he still lives—lives to bless the hand that smote him (Ps. cxix. 71, 75, 67). 3. **In the motive that inspires them all.** By them God seeks, not the destruction of His erring people, but their deliverance. Israel was held

in the degrading bondage of idolatry; the terrible calamities of the captivity were the strokes by which He brake their fetters. When the discipline was over, they hated idolatry in all its forms; all the altar-stones in which they had delighted were "like limestones dashed in pieces," and the Ashérahs and sun-images rose in their midst no more. It is the same motive that inspires Him in all His afflictive dealings with His people to-day (H. E. I., 56–59, 66–74). Therefore, if He is visiting us with afflictions,—1. Let us not be rebellious, but submissive (H. E. I., 158). 2. Let us be moved to penitential self-examination (H. E. I., 145–147). 3. Let us give heartfelt thanks to God because He is resolved to make us like Himself (Heb. xii. 10; H. E. I., 162–165).

(α.) See pp. 6, 20.

(β.) Verse 8. *In measure.* Rather, *with measure by measure:* Heb. "with *seah-seah*," a seah, being the third part of an ephah, was a moderate measure. With forbearance and graduated severity, dealing out punishment in carefully adjusted quantities, and at successive times, "not suffering Thy whole displeasure to arise," "correcting with judgment, not in anger" (Jer. x. 24, xxx. 11).—*Kay.*

The Discipline of Sin.

xxvii. 9. *By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.*

The history of God's ancient people is a divine teaching. He had brought them into special relations to Himself, and had conferred on them special privileges. They were intended to be witnesses for Him in the world. To a large extent they failed. Instead of persistent faithfulness to their mission, they repeatedly fell into idolatrous practices. Punishment came. They repented. But when the impression was gone, they renewed the sin. For centuries this continued, until the terrible disaster of the Babylonian captivity. Then they finally renounced idolatry. This was the divine design in permitting that disaster to befall them. The prophet foretold it with suggestive accuracy. "By this shall the iniquities of Jacob be purged," &c.

Their conduct, and the divine dealing with them, finds its parallel in the history of the modern Church. The parallel holds—

I. With regard to their sin.

The spiritual Jacob sins. Saintly individuals, here and there, whose conduct is an honour to the gospel; but comparatively limited number. Many who in youth felt strongly have seriously declined from the warmth of their first love. Instead of keeping themselves from the world, they are under its influence; like imperfect swimmers, who get within the power of a wave and find they have neither strength nor skill to cope with it. They listen to the sentiments of the world on matters of religion and morality. By little and little they conform. Like Samson, when shorn of his locks, they become weak as other men. From contentment with imperfection they become reconciled to positive sin. Sometimes they even exceed their teachers. Christian professors who have declined into sinful ways often become worse than those from whom they have taken their lesson.

And does not God hate sin in them as He hates it in others? A man's standing in Christ is nothing, if he is living in wilful sin. It deadens his conscience, interrupts his communion with God, exposes him to the peril of final apostasy and perdition. Read the former as well as the latter part of 1 John i. 7. (H. E. I., 4563–4570.)

II. With regard to the discipline of sin.

The discipline God sent to the Jewish people was—

(1.) *Severe.* It seemed hard to be driven from their beautiful city to a foreign land, possibly to be absorbed in its population or held in slavery. Nor had they the consolation of know-

ing that they had not brought it on themselves. God knows how to regulate the severity of suffering according to all the facts that must be taken into account, and all the ends that are to be served. However severe our sufferings, we are compelled to admit that they are always less than we deserve. But if His strokes are to be felt, they must sometimes be severe.

(2.) *Punitive.* God punished Jacob for his sin; but He did not cast him off. His disapprobation of sin had been shown in words; now it must be shown by punishment (Hos. xii. 2). The sufferings of God's people are sometimes trials of faith. But they are often punishments. When a parent inflicts punishment, does he mean that he has disowned his child? Does it not spring from and prove the relation between them? God punishes as a father: and because He is a father. But this is different from allowing the penal consequences of sin to fall fully on them. That would be disownment, perdition. He fulfils His word (Ps. lxxxix. 30–37. H. E. I., 56–59, 66–70).

(3.) *Corrective.* "Purged; and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin." It does not win the pardon of sin. No man's suffering can atone for his sin. That comes another way. The divine One has atoned. Here repentance, reformation is contemplated. As when the husbandman prosecutes his labours he aims to produce the fruit, so God's design in His people's troubles is to take away their sin. A rough method; but necessary. The wild storm damages but purifies. The vine-dresser cuts off branches that the tree may bear more fruit. The sharp frosts of affliction kill the weeds of sin. The medicine is distasteful, but it attacks and dislodges the disease.

But have afflictions invariably this effect? No. Sometimes received in a rebellious spirit; God not recognised in them; thoughtfulness not encouraged; the heart is hardened; comfort is sought from pernicious sources; the soul is driven further from God and deeper into sin.

But when trouble is sanctified—(1.) *It suggests serious thoughtfulness.* How has it come? From God? Why? Sin. Our moral instincts point to retribution. Perhaps some particular sin. May be an immediate connection of the punishment—with intemperance for instance, or fraudulent business transactions. There will be self-examination. God, responsibility, eternity will be realised. (2.) *It produces self-humiliation.* Confession of sin. Penitential cry for mercy at the cross. Renewed self-dedication. (3.) *It reawakens spiritual life.* It is a reason for the reception of fresh impetus. New earnestness in the culture of holiness; new watchfulness against evil. Like a child corrected.

Then if troubles surround you—(1.) Be conscious of God's hand. Look beyond the secondary causes. (2.) Justify God in His dealing. (3.) Be patient; wait His time. (4.) Study His design in sending the trouble. And unite with Him for the accomplishment of that design (H. E. I., 143–154).—*J. Rawlinson.*

THE DOOM OF THE INCORRIGIBLE.

xxvii. 10, 11. *Yet the defenced city, &c.*

I. WHAT A WONDERFUL PICTURE! Proud Babylon so utterly overthrown that on its site cattle feed, and women gather dried sticks for firewood. What an astonishing faith that rendered it possible for any one even to conceive of such a national revolution. That faith grew out of a victorious confidence in the righteousness of God as the ruler of the world, and in His faithfulness to His promises. Such a faith we should cultivate when we see iniquity triumphant. Its utter overthrow is sure. II. WHAT AN AS-

TONISHING DECLARATION! "For it is a people of no understanding; therefore," &c. It appears to be in direct contradiction to our Saviour's prayer, "Father, forgive them, *for they know not what they do.*" But in the latter case the ignorance was involuntary; in the former, it was deliberate and persistent. Babylon resisted every effort God made to instruct her, and persisted in her career of defiance of His authority and of outrage on all the claims of man. Such obduracy was at length confronted by Divine justice, and then ensued utter ruin. This is the eternal law of the universe. Therefore, let the impenitent tremble, for persistence in sin forfeits all our claims upon God as our Creator (H. E. I., 4488, 4489).

The Gospel Trumpet.

xxvii. 13. *And it shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet, &c.*

The Jews had been scattered everywhither—some wandering in Assyria, and some exiled in Egypt; but their coming back, as by the call of a trumpet, is here predicted. The passage is strongly descriptive of the exiled and perishing condition of sinful men, and of their return at the trumpet-call of the Gospel.

I. The sinner's condition. He is—1. An exile. 2. He is ready to perish.

II. The gospel trumpet.

1. It was not fashioned by man. 2. It is great in its *power*. In a still night you may hear a brazen trumpet two or three miles away; but this is so mighty that it is not only heard from heaven to earth, but it is to arrest the attention of all nations. Men with physical hearing all gone catch the first strain of it. Men buried half a century in crimes have heard it. It is the power of God unto salvation. Instance some of the men who have heard it. 2. It is great in its *sweetness*. 3. It is a trumpet of *alarm*. It puts us on our guard against the foes who are advancing to destroy us. 4. It is a trumpet of *recruit*. It summons us to join the standard of the Son of God. 5. It is a trumpet of *retreat*. It warns us against the fool-hardiness of entering into temptation. 6. It is a trumpet of *victory*. It tells of victories achieved, and of others still more glorious yet to be won. 7. It is a trumpet of *awakening*. As chaplain I was a little while in the army. Early every morning we were awakened by a trumpet sounding the réveille. At that sound all the troops arose from the tents, hastened to their places in the line, and answered the roll-call. That done, they went to their morning rations. We who are the soldiers of Christ cannot always be marching and fighting. The evening will come. The shadows will gather, and we must go to the white tents of the grave. There we shall sleep soundly. But the night will pass along, and the first thing we shall hear will be the trumpet-call sounding the réveille of the resurrection; and we shall come up and fall into the long line of light, the trophies of Christian conflict gleaming in the unsetting sun. The roll shall be called, and we shall answer to our names; and then we shall go to the morning repast of heaven (1 Cor. xv. 52–55).—*De Witt Talmage, D.D.: Christian World Pulpit*, i. 410.

England's Crying Sin.

xxviii. 1–4. *Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, &c.*, (a.)

Ephraim one of the most important of the tribes. It occupied some of the richest land, about the middle of Palestine. When the ten tribes formed a separate kingdom, Ephraim was the principal tribe in it. Hence the new

kingdom was sometimes called Ephraim. Its capital Samaria, here called "the crown of pride." It was a position of great natural strength. Its situation exceedingly beautiful. The sides of the hill on which it was built sloped down to rich valleys, covered with beautiful flowers and fruit-bearing trees. "Glorious beauty." "Fat valleys." No wonder the people were proud of it. When this prophecy was written, it was at the height of its pride. But it was doomed. The glorious beauty was a fading flower. The crown of pride was to be trodden under feet. Samaria was a delicious morsel for the invader, plucked and eaten as soon as seen. Shalmanezer, with the Assyrian host, invaded, overcame, carried the people away, never to return. Unlike Judah in this respect. An unsolved problem to this day, where are the ten tribes? do they still exist, or are they entirely extinct?

It was because of sin. The story of Samaria's idolatry. To tamper with idolatry was to renounce allegiance to Jehovah. But that was not all. Serious moral obliquities came in the wake of idolatry. Among these was intemperance. Had become a crying sin. Was helping to drag the nation down to ruin. "Woe to the crown of pride," &c.

Here is a warning to England. England's crying sin is Samaria's crying sin. God forbid that England should persist in it, so as to bring on herself Samaria's doom! Mark—

I. ITS SINFULNESS. It was treated as sin in the case of Samaria. It is still a sin, as well as a vice and a crime. Keep to the text in pointing out its sinfulness. Drunkards described as "them that are overcome with wine." Not a trifling thing to be overcome. The drunkard allows a thing he loves to overcome him and rob him of that for the safe keeping of which he is responsible to God. He is under obligation to keep himself for God, and he betrays his trust. What is overcome?

1. *Reason.* A great trust. Bound to use it to the best of our ability; therefore to keep it in efficient working order so far as it lies in our power. If you lent a man a tool, or a machine, you would require him to keep it from injury. But strong drink contends with and overcomes reason. You attach no importance to opinions expressed or reasonings attempted by a drunken man. His reason has been overcome by his own consent. He could not have been overcome if he had refused to play with the enemy.

2. *Conscience.* Is not conscience a sacred trust? Sentry at the door of character. Shall the sentry be drugged when the enemy is near? Does not intemperance stupefy the conscience? Many a man who once would have dreaded a sin more than a blow has become regardless of sin, regardless of God. Not only does intoxication deaden the sense of its own criminality; it lowers the moral tone as to everything else. The moral nature becomes enfeebled. Any other temptation more likely to succeed. By little and little comes over the soul a tendency to make light of every kind of sin. Communion with God is broken off. Prayer is a dull and comfortless exercise when the excitement of intemperance has become attractive. The religious nature becomes dead or maudlin under the influence of drunkenness. Alas! that men should undermine and disable their noblest faculty! (H. E. I., 4498).

3. *Physical strength.* Are not our bodies also entrusted to us to keep safely for the uses the Maker intends? If the suicide who takes his own life by a single stroke rushes into the presence of his judge uncalled, must not the man who by negligence, folly, or vice, shortens his life, answer for it in the same way? But the drunkard does this by being overcome with wine.

II. ITS PENALTY. There was a worm at the root of the glorious beauty, and fruitfulness, and pride of Ephraim; and therefore it was a fading flower. The worm was their sinfulness. The drunkard may say that he is prosperous to-day; but the worm is at the root.

1. Look at the consequences to himself. The *deteriorated character*,

lowered tastes, lowered company of many a well-educated and splendid young man, and many a beautiful promising boy. *The social degradation.* "Trodden down." Avoided and despised by former associates. *The ruined circumstances.* Gradually downwards, and finally at the depth of poverty. *The Lost Eternity.* "No inheritance." 2. Look at the consequences to his family. Wife unhappy. Children uneducated and untrained. Home impoverished and desolate. There is a skeleton in that house. 3. Look at the consequences to society. Drunkards usually seek society. Their example influences others.

How to cure? How to prevent? 1. *Legislation.* Can the legislature do nothing more than it has done? What of Sunday closing? What of music saloons? What of limitation of the hours? What of diminishing the number of houses? What of abolition of the traffic? 2. *Abstinence.* Urge it on drunkards as their only chance of recovery. On the young as their best security. On Christians as the most effective protest and influential example. 3. *Religion.* Realise the sinfulness of intemperance. Let the grace of God reign over thoughts, appetites, habits.—*J. Rawlinson.*

(a.) See pages 116 and 127.

The Believer's Dignity and Power.

xxviii. 5, 6. *In that day shall the* LORD *of Hosts be for a crown, &c.*

This sustaining assurance stands in striking antithesis to the solemn threatenings and humbling charges which precede and follow it. It rises like some stately palace amid the ruins of man's humbled pride and broken hopes. This voice comes from heaven in the very hour of earth's desolation and decay. The prominent figure on the prophet's canvas is very unlike the objects grouped around it. On the one side you look into a lovely valley, in the centre of which, on a commanding height, stands Samaria, the capital of the "Ten Tribes," "the crown of pride," "the glorious beauty." But that proud crown is soon to be cast to the ground; that "glorious beauty" is but as a garland of fading flowers; that luxuriant valley, whose very "fatness" was made the minister of sensual indulgence, will soon be overswept by the desolating march of the Assyrian invader; that gaudy splendour, the boast of Ephraim's drunkards, is as short-lived as the wreaths which the revellers bind around their brows. The worm of intemperance is gnawing at the root of "the fading flower," and overhead the storm is gathering that will blight its beauty. Turn now to the other side of the central figure, where the kingdom of Judah is introduced (ver. 7). Jerusalem as well as Samaria has her troops of reckless inebriates and her scenes of disgusting intoxication; though her punishment is not so near as that of the northern kingdom, here, too, are seen the marks of sure decline. On both sides, then, the prophet's picture is gloomy and portentous—the earth a scene of drunken revelry, and the black sky streaked with the lightnings of divine wrath. But out of this sombre background of sottish intemperance and overhanging judgment, of falling crowns and fading wreaths, rises the luminous figure of our text. "In that day" of vanishing glory "shall the Lord of Hosts," &c. In the fulness of its wealth this promise belongs to us; the Lord of Hosts has become to us "a crown of glory."

I. THE BELIEVER'S DIGNITY. Let us not tone down the grandeur of the promise. Christ is the crown with which the believer is invested. He is an heir of God, a partaker of the divine nature. Let us see what is implied in this representation, bearing in mind the crown to which it stands in contrast. 1. It is a crown of *honour without insecurity.* Man is like a discrowned and exiled king (Lam. v. 16). But God has taken means to

restore him to his lost dignity (1 Cor. i. 30). The crown of original righteousness which sin had torn from our brows and trampled in the dust has been replaced by the righteousness of Christ. How complete and glorious is His work in our behalf, to what dignity does He raise us! This crown cannot be placed on our head without inspiring us with a sense of honour, a feeling of recovered power, of joy and hope and security. There may be a crowned head without a kingly heart. A young prince may mount the throne incapable of discharging its duties, or, perhaps, trembling lest his new dignity should make him a mark for the bullet of the assassin; but the Christian's honour cometh from God, and, along with the restored kingship, kingly qualities are imparted, so that no man can take his crown. 2. This is a crown in which we may *boast without pride*. Samaria was a crown of pride to the Ephraimites, and because they gloried in it, it was soon to be overturned. But while this crown of carnal confidence was thus to be swept away, God becomes to His people a more glorious crown in which they might boast without pride. When anything short of God is made our confidence it fosters vainglory, but with God as our crown all self-sufficiency is excluded. 3. It is a crown of *joy without degradation*. As it does not foster pride, so neither does it allow its wearer to descend to low indulgence. Reference is probably made to the wreath of flowers worn by drunken revellers on festive occasions. Under the plea of festive mirth they wallowed in the mire of sensuality. How soon their garlands would fall in disorder *from* their heads, or fall *with* their heads as they lay in senseless intoxication. The believer's "diadem of beauty" points to purity and self-control (Ps. iv. 7). 4. It is an *unfading* crown. This point in the contrast is equally obvious. And is not "the fading flower" an emblem of all our earthly joys?

"All that sweet was made, but to be lost when sweetest."

This world's fairest chaplets will soon wither on our brows; its honours, possessions, and hopes are evanescent; but the Lord will be our everlasting crown, our God will be our eternal glory (H. E. I., 4975–4989).

II. THE BELIEVER'S POWER.

In ver. 6 we have all the elements of personal power, social well-being, and national greatness (Acts i. 8; Eph. v. 18). The indwelling Spirit confers three benefits. 1. *A clear head.* "A spirit of judgment." Solomon asked this blessing. It does not fall to many of us to sit on the bench, but what is good for the judge is a precious gift for all. When the Spirit pours His light upon the mind, the eyes of our understanding are enlightened. A clear intellect, a sound mind, an unwarped, unprejudiced judgment, is needed in all walks of life. How appropriate is this part of the promise! How could justice be rightly administered in such a state of society as that described by the prophet? If there is one thing that saps the morals, and muddles the understanding, it is intemperance. Men in positions of responsibility need all their wits about them. 2. *A brave heart* is promised "to them who turn the tide of battle to the gate." The soldier as well as the judge is to participate in the gifts of God's Spirit. We have a spiritual warfare to wage (Eph. vi. 12), and we are pledged to conquer the world for Christ. Beware lest we render ourselves unfit for military service by luxurious habits, and sinful indulgence. The drunkards of Ephraim could do nothing to oppose the invaders of their country. We need the Spirit to fire our hearts with courage and enterprise. Without His influence we shall prove poltroons. 3. *A strong arm.* Self-denial is a source of moral courage and of spiritual strength. Far from us be the dissoluteness which enfeebles our powers, both of mind and body.

Such, then, are the contents of this precious promise. Oh, that we were all invested with this crown of holiness, dignity, and beauty. How many

are content with the gilded coronets and fading chaplets of the world. You remember the scene in the "Pilgrim's Progress," part ii., which has been made the subject of a painting by Sir Noel Paton—the man raking straw while one held a glittering crown over his head. Make Christ your boast. The crown of pride shall be hurled to the ground, the garlanded revellers shall sink in their own corruption, the honours which men so eagerly seek are as a fading flower, but this crown shall sparkle for ever on the believer's head (Dan. xii. 3; Ps. xc. 17).—*William Guthrie, M.A.*

God had said He would discrown Ephraim, remove his beauty, and stain his pride. This was done when Samaria was overthrown by the Assyrians. "In that day" He would do to the "residue of His people"—apparently the kingdom of Judah—what is said in our present text. It was done in the reign of Hezekiah, when the true worship was re-established, reformation effected, and the nation defended against its enemies.

The text may be regarded, however, as a description of the splendour of the regenerated world.

I. THE PERSONS INTERESTED.

"The residue of His people: him that sitteth in judgment: and them that turn the battle to the gate." All classes. Brave defenders; governors and administrators of justice, and the great mass of the people. Hence we observe that the blessing of the Gospel is needed by and suited to every class and every man. If there be a man anywhere who does not need it, it is either because—(1), he has no soul to save; or (2), he has not sinned; or (3), he is sufficient in himself to remove sin and its consequences from himself. But none of these can be said of any man.

II. THE BLESSING PROMISED.

It consists in that which the Lord will be to the regenerated world. 1. *Honour.* Men mistake the things that constitute the true honour and dignity of human nature. Sounding titles; enormous wealth; personal beauty; commanding intellect; undisputed power. They are all insufficient and insecure, like fading flowers. God is the true crown of glory to man. When the soul returns from its wanderings to God and is re-united to Him through Christ, the crown is placed upon his head (Jer. ix. 23, 24). 2. *Wisdom.* Both in barbarous and civilised countries, man without the Gospel is ignorant of the character of God, and of the way to approach Him (1 Cor. i. 21). He gropes about in the darkness, if he desire to find Him at all. But Christ is made of God to us "wisdom," as well as "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." In Him the divine character is clearly seen in the fulness, harmony, and glory of its attributes. In Him also we learn how man can be reconciled to God, and the way to eternal life. 3. *Strength.* Not physical, nor intellectual power, however valuable in the regions proper to them. But moral power; the power of the human will; the most important power of all. This alone possesses the terrible capacity of resisting the Almighty. The most powerful animals act as they have been created to act. All mechanical forces act according to their laws. But man, possessed of will, is possessed of a power that can either defy or obey the authority of Omnipotence. When the Gospel comes to the human heart, it constrains the will into a mighty force for good. God and man combine to overthrow the empire of evil in the heart and in the world. "The Lord of hosts is for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate."

III. THE TIME INDICATED.

"In that day." Christ came "in the fulness of time." There are reasons and circumstances specially favourable to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. There is a time in the purpose of Jehovah when all nations shall walk in the light. We may mark the circumstances which are usually indicative of the further spread of the Gospel. 1. When there is a time of special revival, reformation, and earnestness in the Church. As in time

of Hezekiah. 2. When God stirs up His people to exert themselves for the world's salvation, it is a sign that the world's salvation is coming on apace. "When God enters the chamber, and awakes His children, and bids them rise, it is a sign that the morning has come." 3. When the church longs, waits, prays for the success of the work, the time is likely to have come. "As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children." Let the Church of Christ really desire, believe in, pray for the world's conversion, and God will open the windows of heaven and pour down the blessing. Have you been sufficiently interested in the world's salvation? As individuals? Are we sufficiently interested in our own?—*J. Rawlinson.*

Early Religious Training.

(*Sunday School Anniversary Sermon.*)

xxviii. 9, 10. *Whom shall He teach knowledge? &c.*

Whether we regard these verses as the language of the drunkards of Ephraim, deriding the Lord's messengers for the plainness and urgency of their unwelcome instructions, or as the language of the prophet himself affirming interrogatively the spiritual ignorance and imbecility of the people, with their prophets and priests, they suggest the importance of earnestly instructing the young in the knowledge of our relations to God and eternity. We may turn to them more hopefully than to the old. Youth is the time for learning. In the first ten years of life are laid the foundations of the social and religious character which every man carries to the grave. Therefore we should not leave them to be laid haphazard, but should do our utmost to bring it to pass that they shall be such that on them can be built the structure of a holy life. To accomplish this we must instruct them in the revealed will of God. 1. The youth learns nothing good until he is taught. Though wise to do evil, to do good he has no knowledge. 2. The young mind is susceptible of deep and enduring impressions (H. E. I., 775, 776, 786). 3. Scriptural knowledge is not only of surpassing value, but is more easily imparted to the young than most of that human knowledge for which the opening powers are often severely taxed. If difficulties arise from immaturity and levity of mind, they are more than balanced by freedom from the prejudices of age, and the perplexing cares of life; by their docility and instinctive desire to penetrate the unknown; by the eagerness with which they seize upon the explanations of facts in nature and providence, or on similitudes and allegories; and by their unsuspecting confidence in the ability of their appointed teachers. Their natural aversion to God is but partially developed, and waits the coming of riper years to mature its strong resistance to the Divine claims. 4. The weightiest obligations rest on parents to give their children religious instruction (H. E. I., 803–806). When parents are unable to do so personally, through defect of ability, or the urgency of paramount duties, it is their privilege to do so through the kind offices of others. 5. A failure in the discharge of parental obligations to children imposes on others who fear God the duty of teaching them knowledge. They are immortal; for them Christ died. Of the fulness and glory of the results of a faithful performance of this duty no adequate conception can be formed by us on this side of heaven. —*R. S. Storrs, D.D.: American National Preacher*, xix. 121–141.

The Power of Littles.

xxviii. 10. *Here a little and there a little.*

The application of this text is first of all to the impressions produced by the Word of God and the efficacy of constant religious instruction. But it is in this same way, by little and little, that all great and lasting impressions are made and the mightiest results accomplished.

I. The processes of nature.—Mighty and sudden changes are not the rule, but gradual and prepared ones. The seasons, the months, day into night, night into day—how gradual and imperceptible the transitions. The germination of seed, &c. **II. The formation of character.**—Little by little every man's character is *formed* (H. E. I., 709–711, 1836–1851) or *spoiled* (H. E. I., 4521–4523, 4720–4725). All the steps, successively, that lead either to heaven or hell are small, one by one, except in great crimes, and even then there has been a gradual preparation for them (H. E. I., 428, 429). So conversion, that great change of the soul, is prepared for imperceptibly (H. E. I., 1462). From minute and commonplace thoughts, words, actions, results character for eternity! **III. Christian service.**—Called not to acts of heroism, but to a faithful discharge of commonplace duties (H. E. I., 4149). **IV. Christian work.**—It is by little and little that, in such a world as this, we must do the greater part of the good that we ever accomplish (H. E. I., 1725). **V. The training of children.**—Heavenly habits are to be formed in them by the influence upon them of daily, familiar, minute, but ever-recurring examples set before them (H. E. I., 777–779, 790, 802). **VI. Preparation for heaven.**—Try to gain a little for God, a little for heaven, a little more of grace *every* day. Do this in *little* things and you will accomplish *great* things. Here a little and there a little will carry you on from step to step, from grace to glory (H. E. I., 2512, 2537).—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.: American National Preacher*, xxvi. 145–152.

The Sure Foundation.

xxviii. 16. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold! I lay in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone for a firm foundation; he that believeth shall not be in haste.—Birks* (α.)

I. Who this foundation is. II. Where this foundation is laid. III. The Author of this foundation. IV. The character of this foundation. V. The safety of those who build upon it. —*R. Bingham, M.A.: Sermons*, p. 202.

I. God's foundation for the eternal salvation of sinners. II. Its properties and excellences. III. The blessedness of those who build on it.—*W. Hancock, B.D.: Sermons*, pp. 1–16.

The person and salvation of Jesus Christ are frequently spoken of under the image here presented, the most obvious and expressive image of security, that of a foundation. Our Saviour expressly appropriates to Himself (Psalm cxviii. 22). The same architectural idea appears in Eph. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 4–8.

I. The grand object which God proposed to Himself in all His dispensations to man, viz., the laying of a foundation on which the hope of a repenting sinner might rest, with regard to God and Eternity. We trace this object, 1. In the primal promise (Gen. iii. 15). 2. In the mysterious rite of sacrifice divinely appointed from the beginning to prefigure "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." 3. In the whole system of the Mosaic law, "the school-

master to bring us to Christ." 4. More and more distinctly announced in the Psalms and Prophecies. The foundation proclaimed by Jehovah in the text is the chief end of all He has done and revealed to mankind; the central point in which all the lines of His providence and His word meet and terminate. Nature supplies the scene, providence the scaffolding, revelation the plan, of that mighty spiritual edifice of which this is the foundation.

II. **This foundation was needed.** None will dispute this point. So sensible are men that they need a foundation for hope towards God, that every one is disposed to lay his own. Every one feels that without some restitution made to a holy God sin cannot be pardoned nor the sinner saved. The question is, How shall a proper foundation be laid? where shall an adequate restitution be found? The most important question in the universe to be answered, and at the same time the most difficult! (1 Sam. ii. 25). Only three kinds of restitution on the part of man are imaginable—penitence, good works, voluntary sufferings; but none of these, nor all put together, can be deemed satisfactory in the case before us. 1. *Penitence* is no foundation of the soul before God; the most sorrowful remembrance of sin cannot repair it (H. E. I., 4225–4228). 2. Neither are *good works*, to which the same insufficiency attaches; they are always required, and therefore can never possess a superfluity or redundancy of merit (H. E. I., 375, 1950). And this applies to the best works; but what are ours in the sight of God? 3. The only remaining kind of restitution is by *voluntary sufferings:* this, by its very definition, is absurd and vain, for if any sufferings are required they become part of our duty; but to invent penances of our own is no part of our duty, and must be contradictory rather than satisfactory to the Divine law. Penitence, good works, voluntary sufferings, may be methods of procuring for us the priestly absolution of a poor sinful man like ourselves; but they will not secure for us the Divine acceptance.

III. Observe, it is in the midst of the false foundations, the "baseless fabrics" of sinners, that God in our text introduces His own, **the only true and solid foundation.** All who build their hope on any other will be compelled at last to say, "We have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hid ourselves." See 1 Cor. iii. 10. The wonderful way in which this stone was laid; how a person of the Godhead assumed our human nature, He who was in the form of God took the form of a servant, He became "Jehovah our righteousness." See 2 Cor. v. 19. He who laid the foundation of the heavens and the earth alone could lay this foundation in Zion!

The excellent qualities of this foundation. It is represented—1. As "*a tried stone:*" a foundation which has resisted the strongest attempts to shake it,—that has stood the trial of unnumbered enemies and friends. It has been proved in the fiery trial of Divine justice, and the sins of the whole world have tried its strength to sustain an overwhelming weight. The storms of persecution have raged against it in vain, still it stands uninjured (Heb. xiii. 8)! In every respect "a tried stone;" tried by God, by Satan, by man; tried in life, in death, in eternity; tried by all the saints in all their trials; and never tried in vain! 2. As "*a corner-stone.*" The corner-stone unites both sides of an edifice; and St. Paul represents Christ as Him in whom the whole building, fitly compacted, rises a spiritual habitation of God (Eph. ii. 19–22). 3. As "*precious;*" precious in respect to the Saviour's Person as the only begotten Son of God; in respect to His sacrifice; a foundation composed not of corruptible things (1 Peter i. 18, 19). 4. As "*a sure foundation:*" not an imaginary one like every other, but one real and substantial! In the Hebrew the word is reduplicated for the greater

emphasis, "A foundation, a foundation!" Not a transitory but an eternal one. We are dying men; we sojourn in a world of vanity and death; what we want is a "sure foundation." Behold in Christ this grand desideratum!

V. The happiness of him who rests on this foundation. "He that believeth shall not make haste;" he shall not be thrown into disquietude and agitation of spirit. Never has the strength of this foundation been so well appreciated as when it was most tried, most needed. When our flesh and our heart fail, then is the time to find in God the rock of our heart, in Christ the foundation of our soul!

CONCLUSION.—But then we must possess the character defined in the text; "he that believeth," is he that amidst the wreck of nature shall be saved on this foundation. We must see to it that we have that faith which is known by its fruits, which keeps the commandments, purifies the heart, works by love, overcomes the world, resists the devil, rejoices in Christ.—*Robert Hall: Fifty Sermons*, pp. 68–86.

I. God's foundation for the stability of His Church. 1. *This foundation was planned in the eternal counsels of Jehovah* (1 Pet. i. 20; Luke xi. 50; Rev. xiii. 8). 2. *This foundation was actually laid in the incarnation and sufferings of Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 22). 3. *This foundation is proclaimed in the preaching of the Gospel* (Luke xxiv. 47; Acts xiii. 38, 39).

II. The peculiar qualities by which this foundation is distinguished. 1. It is a *stone, denoting strength.* 2. It is a *living stone.* Possessing life in Himself, He is able to communicate it (John i. 4, v. 26; Rom. viii. 2). 3. A *tried stone.* The Father tried it, earth tried it, hell tried it. 4. A *precious corner-stone.* Corner-stones are generally placed for three purposes, for (*a.*) union; for (*b.*) beauty; for (*c.*) direction or example. 5. A *sure foundation.*

III. The safety and blessedness of all those who depend upon this foundation.—*J. Sherman: British Pulpit*, ii. 185–193.

Whatever subordinate reference there may be in these words to the Jews, the principal reference is to the Messiah. For this view we have apostolic authority. St. Paul says: "As it is written." Where? In our text. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed." And St. Peter quotes from Isaiah the same text.

I. THE EMBLEM OF THE LORD JESUS. "A stone." Whether we consider Him "a stone" for solidity, or for strength, or for duration, He is all these; for whatever changes may take place among men, with Him "there is no variableness nor shadow of turning." Peter calls Him—1. A "living stone," meaning that He has life in Himself, that He procures and dispenses it to others. So Paul (Col. iii. 4). 2. He is a *tried stone.* Everything in regard to Him was tried in the days of His flesh: His wisdom, His meekness, His love. 3. He is a *precious stone.* Precious to God the Father, to angels, to Christians. (1 Pet. ii. 7.) 4. A precious *corner-stone.* The corner-stone stands to unite. He unites in His person deity and manhood. We see in Him united the Old and New Testament dispensations. He unites Jews and Gentiles (Eph. ii. 14).

II. His destination. "Behold I lay in Zion," &c. 1. *Who lays this foundation?* GOD. 2. *Where does He lay this foundation?* "In *Zion.*" Jesus was a Jew, of the family of David. To the woman at the well He said, "Salvation is of the Jews." See Ps. cx. 2; and Isa. ii. 2, 3, xxv. 6.

III. How well He answers the purpose and end. "A sure foundation." He is a sure foundation for all. Myriads have trusted in Him, and to the whole world it may be said (Isa. xxvi. 4).

IV. The blessedness of those who make use of it. "He that believeth shall not make haste." This declara-

tion is not opposed to *diligence;* no, for "the King's business requireth haste." No (Ps. cxix. 60). But—1. To *impatience* (see chap. v. 19), "Blessed are they that *wait* on Him." 2. To *confusion.* Terror will overwhelm the godless (Rev. i. 7). But believers (1 John ii. 28).

V. Observe the ushering in of the whole scene. "Behold." Angels pause before the great work of redemption, and "desire to look unto these things." "Herein is His love made manifest." Behold He "hath commended His love, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Be not of those who "Behold and wonder and perish;" but let the command inspire you with gratitude, admiration, obedience, and zeal. "Hear, and your souls shall live."—*William Jay: Sunday Evening Discourses,* pp. 18–25.

I. The prominent idea of the text. Christ a foundation-stone. 1. The *Builder* is Jehovah Himself. He drew the plan of the spiritual building, determined the materials of which it should be constructed, the stone on which it should rest, and then with His own hand laid that foundation. 2. The *Site* of the building was "Zion." This is generally explained as referring to the Church. But is not the Church the building? Is there not an incongruity in saying, I lay in the Church a foundation-stone on which the Church is to be built? Is there any reason why the passage might not be understood literally as referring to Jerusalem? Is there not a very appropriate sense in which it was true that the foundation on which the Church rests was laid in Jerusalem? Was it not there that the Son of God offered up Himself as a sacrifice, and made atonement for man? Was it not there that the Holy Spirit descended and gave effect to the finished work of redemption? Was it not there the gospel was first preached by the apostles? And was not all this in accordance with the pre-arrangements of God's plan? As Zechariah's fountain was to be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and as Ezekiel's waters were to flow forth from the temple, so Isaiah's foundation-stone was laid in Jerusalem. 3. The *building* to be reared on this stone was to be composed of Christian men of all ages and all nations. They are being collected now; they will all as lively stones be gathered in, fitly framed together, and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.

II. The qualities attributed to this foundation-stone. 1. A *tried* stone. 2. A *precious* corner-stone. How shall we estimate its worth? By its intrinsic value? Precious beyond all price. By its scarceness? No other stone like it in the universe. By the importance of the service it renders in the building? Precious to the Builder, to the holy angels, to the redeemed before the throne, to believers on earth. 3. A *sure* foundation. Firm, solid, safe.

III. The import of the promise annexed (β.) 1. Shall not make haste, or be in haste. 2. Shall not be put to shame (Rom. ix. 33, x. 11, &c.)

CONCLUSION.—If not on the foundation, get on it. If on it, keep on it. Be not content to build on it yourself, but try to induce others to do so.—*John Corbin.*

I. Sinful, dying man needs a foundation on which he may securely rest his immortal hopes. Every man who studies his own nature and destiny as immortal and accountable instinctively feels that he needs something to give him support under the trials of life, and peace and hope as he is about to enter upon the invisible world. This feeling may exert no decisive influence over his conduct; it may be counteracted by other influences; but it is in him; and he cannot get rid of it.

II. Such a foundation is laid for him in Zion. This foundation is our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. ii. 4–6). It is described (1) as *a stone,* indicating the solidity and durableness of that on which we are invited to rest our im-

mortal interests. In rearing a building of any importance, we deem it essential that the foundation be laid in the most enduring materials. How much more should we look for this when we build for eternity! 2. As *a tried stone.* It has been tested in every possible way, and in the severest manner, and therefore justly claims our full and unhesitating confidence (γ.) Other grounds of hope have been resorted to by men—philosophy, infidelity, self-righteousness—but they have always failed in the day of trial. But a countless multitude, as they have risen from earth to heaven, have testified to the perfect safety of trusting in Christ. Hence it is called (3) *a precious stone.* How precious none can know but such as have made trial of it in their times of need—the sinner, burdened with a sense of guilt, and sinking in despair; the believer, rejoicing in hope, and looking forward to heaven as his eternal home; the dying Christian, as he closes his eyes on this world, in joyful hope of another and a better; the redeemed in glory, as they cast their crowns at His feet. Ask them what they think of Christ. 4. As *a corner-stone.* The principal weight of an edifice rests on the corners; and hence, in building, the largest and firmest blocks are selected and placed there as best adapted to unite and support the whole structure. This is the idea intended to be expressed when Christ is spoken of as a corner-stone. It is He who, by His truth, His grace, and His spirit, converts and sustains the whole living temple (Eph. ii. 20–22). 5. As summing up the whole—*a sure foundation.* Hence it is said, "He that believeth shall not make haste" (α). The specific idea is that of a man on whose house the tempest beats, and who apprehends that the foundation is insecure, or feels it to be giving way beneath him, and therefore makes haste to flee from his dwelling to seek a more safe position. The foundation laid in Zion is so firm and secure that if a man trusts himself on it, he shall have no cause of alarm, however the storms may beat, and the waves dash and foam around him. Amid the wreck of matter and the crash of dissolving worlds, he shall not be confounded, but shall come forth at last unharmed and victorious over all, and find in his Judge a friend, and in the kingdom of his Father and God an everlasting home.

III. It is the duty and privilege of all to build their hopes on this foundation without delay.

Joel Hawes, D.D.: Sermons, pp. 307–317.

(α.) "*He that believeth shall not make haste.*" The apostles Paul and Peter, in citing this passage, quote from the Septuagint, and accordingly they render it "*he that believeth shall not be ashamed*" (Rom. ix. 33), or "confounded" (1 Pet. ii. 6). The Hebrew word properly signifies "to make haste," and hence, according to one lexicographer, "to hurry hither and thither as persons in confusion." The apparent discrepancy between the text as given by Isaiah in the Old Testament and as quoted by the apostles in the New vanishes at once when we consider the nature of the figure employed. Conceive the situation of a man who has "built his house upon the sand." The rains descend, the floods beat upon that house, the foundations begin to give way, the house totters to its fall, and the frightened inmate, terrified and bewildered, "makes haste" to escape to a place of safety. Another has built his house upon the rock. Upon this also the rains descend and the floods beat, but its firm foundations remain unmoved because it is founded upon a rock, and its happy inmate, so far from being obliged to "make haste" to escape, in conscious security may smile at the storm. "He that believeth shall not make haste"—"shall not be confounded"—"shall not be ashamed" of his hope.—*John Dowling, D.D.*

(β.) A. V. "*Shall not make haste.*" See translations by Alexander and Delitzsch. Kay and Birks, "*Shall not be in haste.*" Cheyne, "*He that hath faith shall not give way.*" The text reading does not suit the connection; it seems to have arisen out of a confusion of the letters mem and kheth. Sept., Tay., Pesh., feeling that something was wrong, render freely "Shall not be put to shame?" But as to the connection see preceding extract from Dowling.

(γ.) If you had a bridge to cross which had stood for centuries and over which thousands of people had passed every day with entire safety, you would feel no hesitation in making that of it yourself. So is Christ set before you—a *tested* foundation of hope.—*Hawes.*

OUR TRUST AND OUR TEST.

xxviii. 16. *A tried stone.*

This phrase may be more literally rendered "a stone of proof," and so rendered admits of two interpretations. The commonly received opinion, that it means a stone which has been tried and found sufficient is probably correct, and is more in harmony with the context; but Calvin understands by it a stone which was to be the test or standard of comparison for others. However this may be, we have inspired authority for saying that the stone is no other than our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. ii. 6); and we may profitably consider Him in these two aspects, as our Trust and our Test.

I. HE IS OUR TRUST, because He has been tried. "Tried in the days of His humanity by all the vehemence of temptations, and the weight of afflictions, yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny."—(*Hervey.*) [For further amplifications, see the other outlines on this text].

II. HE IS OUR TEST. In Him we have the true touchstone of character. All men naturally divide themselves into good or bad, saved or lost, by their acceptance or rejection of Him. By this touch-stone strange discoveries have been made in every age. The Pharisees and Scribes had a high character for piety until this trying stone was applied to them, and then it appeared what they were—the most inveterate enemies of God on earth. The reception which men gave to Jesus Christ is the grand criterion of their character, as Simeon predicted, (Luke ii. 34). This is the supreme test by which God is trying *you*, and by which your eternal destiny will be determined.—*Samuel Davies, A.M.: Sermons*, ii. 29–33.

A TESTED SAVIOUR.

xxviii. 16. *A tried stone.*

This is perhaps an allusion to the custom of builders who are about to lay the foundation for some massive structure. Before they raise the edifice they test the character of the substratum on which they think of building. Is not our blessed Lord in every way a tried, a tested, an approved Saviour! I. *Did not the Father try Him* and find Him faithful in every way?—in His willingness, His obedience, His love? II. *Did not Satan try Him* and find Him upright? Tried by temptations addressed to His natural appetite, to pride, and to ambition. III. *Was He not tried by wicked and unbelieving men?* By Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians in His own day, and by sceptics in ours. IV. *By the afflicted, the poor, the destitute* in His own day and ours? and in each case only to bring out more clearly the marvellousness of His resources. V. *By the contrite and broken-hearted?* VI. *By believers in every generation?* And what has been their unanimous testimony? Is it not that they found Him more than equal to all their wants and able to do for them all that they could ask or think? Could so many millions of witnesses, in other respects trustworthy, be mistaken on this point? VII. HAVE YOU TRIED HIM? —*R. Bingham, M.A.: Sermons*, pp. 208–215.

False Refuges.

xxviii. 17. *And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.*

Numerous are the stratagems of Satan to ruin souls. In some he effects this by hurrying them on in the broad way of open transgression; in others, by rendering them the victims of some peculiar constitutional sin—pride, avarice, &c.; in others, by inciting a spirit of disbelief of the truth (Ps. xiv. 1); in others, by inducing inattention to the things of the soul. But our text leads us to contemplate *the false refuges to which he causes others to betake themselves.*

I. **Sinners often feel the necessity of a refuge.** This arises sometimes from—1. *An internal sense of guilt.* Unless in cases of utter obduracy, transgression and remorse are ever wedded together. Even Pagans have felt these workings of conscience, these pangs of guilty torture. Under these, men sigh for peace, long for rest, and earnestly desire a refuge. 2. *The calamitous events of life.* Sudden adversity, domestic bereavement, visiting the open grave of some friend, bodily indisposition, mental disquietude, &c. 3. *The supposed nearness of death.* Men who mock at religion in health, quail at the approach of death. Voltaire trembled in a storm, anxious then to have deliverance, to obtain a refuge. 4. *Under the alarming influence of the preached word.* When the truth has flashed across the mind and startled the conscience. Thus Felix, and thus thousands. How lamentable that these impressions and convictions are often so fleeting; but still more so, when the convicted sinner flees to sources of false security.

II. **Sinners frequently betake themselves to refuges of lies.** Of these notice—1. *Partial reformation of life.* Giving up the grosser sins of which they have been guilty, intemperance, profanity, fraud, &c. When the whole body is diseased, the amputation of one member is fruitless. 2. *A general regard to Christian morality,* to the outward acts of obedience, and the decencies of society. 3. *An outward profession of religion.* Punctual regard to public worship, a proper regard to ordinances, a name among the people of God. 4. *A prominent and public sectarian spirit.* Rigid adherence to party, sect, and creed; violent anathematising all others; great ardour in the public events of the Church to which they belong. "Come, see my zeal," &c. 5. *Distinguished generosity.* Liberality to the poor, works of beneficence, co-operation with the compassionate and benevolent. All these things are good in their legitimate sphere and extent, but they are all often only refuges of lies; they may engage a man's anxious attention, while the root of the matter has yet no place in his heart (1 Cor. xiii. 1–3; Matt. vii. 22, 23). 6. A still more commonly frequent refuge of lies: *a general reliance on the mercy of God.* A kind of self-confident persuasion that God is good, that He will not punish, an indefinite resting on His clemency, forgetting His righteousness, purity, truth, &c.

III. **Such refuges of lies will be ultimately swept away.** They will be so—1. *In a dying hour.* Then the mental vision often becomes peculiarly acute, the moral sense keen and distinct, and the honesty of the spirit throws off the tinsel mask, which is now manifestly worse than useless. How poor and worthless is self-righteousness, in all its possible extent, to a spirit just stepping into the presence of the holy God. A queen of England, although professing to be "Defender of the Faith," and having bishops at her control, felt this, and died in circumstances of unutterable alarm. 2. *In the morning of the resurrection.* Then all classes and distinctions will be reduced to two. None but the righteous will have a part in the first resurrection. Others will rise with shame, confusion, and horror to everlasting contempt. 3. *In the deci-*

sions of the judgment. God will judge all men in righteousness. The wicked and the righteous will be separated (Matt. xxv. 32, 33); no pretence, disguise, plea, stratagem, importunity, or effort, will avail. All refuges of lies will be swept away.

APPLICATION.—1. Warn against these destructive schemes and wiles of Satan. 2. Exhibit the one only refuge, Jesus Christ, who delivers from the wrath to come. 3. Urge instant faith in Him. "Count all things but loss," &c. All who believe in him are secure for both worlds. To this Refuge let *all* repair, earnestly, and now.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.: Pulpit Cyclopædia*, iii. 153–156.

THE SHORT BED AND THE NARROW COVERING.

xxviii. 20. *For the bed is shorter*, &c.

Of all the striking images made use of in this chapter, none was so likely to catch the ear, and impress itself on the memory, and become a seed of useful reflection, as that embodied in this proverbial saying. Epigrams have done much to guide popular movements. Lord Bacon speaks of them as "the edge-tools which cut and penetrate the knots of business and affairs." The adage before us is homely, but forcible and expressive. To a fastidious taste and a false refinement it may appear undignified; but where one has to deal with reckless folly and obstinacy, he selects what best serves his purpose of exposing it. Lifted out of the occasions which gave them birth, these pithy and sententious sayings admit of manifold applications. They refute error, and make truth visible.

I. Apply this aphorism to the *shifts of diplomacy.* This is the use which the prophet makes of it. No words could better expose the folly of the Egyptian alliance. The "scornful" politicians of Jerusalem "had not only secured themselves by a treaty with that personification of death and hell, the Assyrian, but they had outwitted him; for what chance could a mere barbarian soldier have against the deep-laid policy of an old, long-civilised state? They were in communication with Egypt and Ethiopia, and at the proper time would bring the armies of Tirhakeh to free them from the power of Sennacherib." This was the plausible but imprudent and deceitful scheme which the prophet denounced; and all such measures will in due time land their short-sighted and dishonest authors in the short bed with the narrow covering.

II. Apply it to the *dishonesties of trade* and the *reckless extravagances of living.* The rash speculator and the careless spendthrift will soon find out its truth. If they do not live within their means, and regulate dress and diet according to their income, they will soon find themselves in the short bed, vainly seeking warmth and comfort under a scanty covering. How much society has suffered from reckless speculation! Many a promising youth has foolishly squandered his means, and has grown so enormously in his luxurious habits, that he has no room to stretch himself on the short bed of his income. Visions of sequestration disturb his repose; pinching poverty hinders his comfort.

III. The same imprudent miscalculation is seen in *the plans of worldly-minded men.* Their purpose is to make a fortune, and then retire to enjoy it. They imagine that thus they shall have constructed an ample bed with abundant covering, in which they may comfortably spend the evening of life's day. But they have made their bed without measuring its occupant at his full height. Providing for the body, but neglecting the soul, they are cribbed and confined within the narrow boundaries of time, and it will be well for them if they discover their mistake when the chill frosts of old age seize upon their uncovered limbs.

IV. Apply it to the *expedients by which men seek spiritual rest.* There

are many short beds on which they seek repose, and narrow coverings in which they try to wrap themselves. What apologies do they find for their sin!—how earnestly they work out a righteousness of their own in which to find shelter, forgetting that "all have sinned and come short," and "the one thing" they lack is a fatal defect! They will soon shiver with cold under this insufficient covering. Nothing but the saving work of Christ can answer man's need as a sinful creature. Here is both room and warmth (Matt. xi. 28). As the fond mother lays her child to sleep, so will He provide for our comfort (Isa. lxvi. 13). The word "hap" is dear to a Scotch ear, expressing "the care with which the bed-clothes are laid upon the little forms, and carefully tucked in about the round sleeping cheeks." Seek rest in Christ. He will support you in sickness and soothe you in pain; and when laid down on your last bed, rejoicing in the fulness and all-sufficiency of His grace, you will fall asleep in Him. A common proverb runs, "He has made his bed, and now he must lie on it," sometimes harshly used, yet expressing a solemn truth (Gal. vi. 7; Isa. l. 11).—*William Guthrie, M.A.*

An end is proposed to be accomplished; the first consideration will be the suitability and sufficiency of means. The kingdom of Judah was trusting in inadequate defences against the Assyrians, whose approach was feared. False gods. Words of false prophets. Alliance with Egypt. Warned against all these. True defence in faithful adherence to God as covenant God. If they continued to look elsewhere they would find themselves in the position of a man in a bed too short for him, or with a covering too narrow to wrap himself. Instead of comfort and rest, weariness, discomfort, unrest. The bed does not answer its end. It is inadequate.

This thought is capable of another application. Men's religious beliefs and practices may be inadequate. A religion for man must be true in itself, be evidenced as true, be adapted to and sufficient for his religious necessities, capacities, and susceptibilities. Otherwise, it is inadequate.

Point out the inadequacy of some religious ideas that are in vogue.

I. Scepticism is inadequate. There is not only the unbelief that denies the truth of Christianity, but the more subtle unbelief which refuses to affirm while it does not exactly deny. It says we know nothing, and may act on the assumption that there is nothing—as to God, Christ, a future state. Now we might show that there is sufficient evidence, but at present only show that this theory is not adequate to the demands of human nature. It is a fair inference from the almost universal experience of mankind that the doctrines of God, conscience, responsibility, prayer, a future state of existence, are congenial to human nature. Education does not account for them, although it may give them shape. Without them human nature is short of something which it needs. It is adapted to them. Without them its deepest needs are inadequately supplied.

The religion of the Bible supplies the need of man in all these respects. It reveals the Divine Being and character. It tells of a Father on whom, in his helplessness, man may call. It guides his conscience so that it may fitly guide *him*. It acquaints us with the nature of the life to come.

II. Self-righteousness is inadequate. There are necessities which did not exist in man's original constitution, self-created necessities. The state of sinfulness is a second nature, superinduced on the original nature. Overlooking this, many imagine the Divine favour can be won and the religious life prosecuted by obedience to God and kindness to man. They proceed on the supposition that it is only necessary to continue such a course from any given commencement. If the sinful part is recognised, it is assumed that it will be condoned in consideration of the new service. It is assumed

that the long-standing debt of former sin will be gradually paid by goodness in excess of ordinary demands, or that God, in some unknown way, will remit it.

This bed is too short. This covering too narrow. The religion for a fallen creature must deal seriously with the state of sin, guilt, condemnation. The question meets you at the outset, if every farthing of your present income is absolutely required to meet your barest necessities, how can you out of it pay back debts? Does not the law require a perfect obedience? Do you at present render more than it requires? Do you ever, with your best endeavour, come up to the law?

It is hopelessly inadequate. The religion for man must provide a free forgiveness; one also honourable to God. It is not in our power. It is in God. And He has made such a provision. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is that provision. His obedience, death, righteousness. Freely given without works to the believing sinner. This is the only adequate ground. This bed is long enough. This covering wide enough.

III. Ceremonialism is inadequate. Human nature is impure. It needs cleansing as well as pardon. Some imagine this is accomplished by sacramental grace, through baptism, which is supposed to regenerate; and the mysterious influence of the consecrated bread and wine. All this is inadequate. No outward rite can effect an inward and spiritual change. There must be a new nature. There must be a love of holiness and a living growth into holiness. There must be a new birth. There must be the conviction of sinfulness; the acceptance of Christ; the surrender to the authority of Christ. For this the Gospel provision is adequate. There is the word of God which proclaims the mercy and offers the inducement. There is the Holy Spirit which changes the heart.

Be not satisfied with inadequate religion. Remember the solemn importance of possessing an adequate religion.—*J. Rawlinson.*

Irreligious Mockery.

xxviii. 22. *Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.*

The sense of the ludicrous is excited by words, ideas, images, or objects in which unexpected resemblances are seen in things previously considered incongruous, or in which incongruity is perceived where complete resemblance was supposed. The perception of the ludicrous varies. Where it exists in connection with the ability to convey the ludicrous idea in language, it is called wit. It is one of God's gifts. There is no reason why it should not be exercised. The evil is in untimeliness and excess. It is dispiriting and sad to be with people who always and only see the dismal side of everything. It is equally pitiable to observe people who are ever in search of something laughable. The latter is a present-day danger. We have publications whose aim is to present the ludicrous side of everything. The popular taste encourages such writing. Even grand themes are not exempt from this kind of treatment. Some mock deliberately that they may injure; others thoughtlessly for the amusement of the moment. Of all wit it is the most gratuitous, the easiest, the most mischievous and dangerous.

I. The objects by which it is excited.

Religious persons; their peculiarities, especially their foibles. Christian ministers as to their style and manner. In their impatience of the warnings addressed to them by the prophet, the people of Judah mocked his teaching as characterised by the repetition that is only suitable to children (9–13). Some find food for mockery in the

doctrines of the Gospel. Others in its demand of holiness (Prov. xiv. 9). Others in the observances of worship. Others find the language of Scripture the most convenient point to their jests.

II. THE MOTIVES IN WHICH IT ORIGINATES.

Many do it from mere inconsiderateness. It is sometimes indulged in from the wish to please. Mockery of religious persons and things is so palatable to many that there is great temptation to it. More frequently it originates in the rooted hostility of the carnal mind against all earnest religion. Mockery is the most annoying form of attack; it is most keenly felt; it is most difficult to answer. It serves the purpose when argument fails. One grinning Voltaire may do more execution than many reasoning Humes. Many a time since the days of Nehemiah have Sanballat and his Samaritans mocked the builders of the wall of Jerusalem.

III. THE DANGERS WHICH IT INVOLVES.

1. To those who hear it. They become less susceptible of religious impression. If the head of a family habitually refer to religious persons and subjects in a mocking and disrespectful manner, his children will probably grow up with a dislike of religion.

2. To those who indulge in it. They lose their own respect for religion, if they had any, by associating it with ideas of a low and ludicrous nature. They lose the elevating mental influence of having their minds in earnest contact with its grand truths. They lose the spiritual improvement which might have been the result of such contact.

3. And the warning of the text points to direct punishment. The "consumption determined." It points to the bands of captivity which would be more strong because of their unbelieving mockery. The mocker is preparing strong bands of distress for his conscience, if the day should ever come when he is awakened to a sense of sin and an earnest desire for salvation. How bitterly will he repent the injury his levities did to his own mind and the mind of others. Still more saddening is the thought that the mocker is likely so to harden his heart into insensibility to serious impression, that even on the bed of death, and with the solemnities of eternity before him, it will be impossible to awaken serious concern.

Follow the mocking soul to the bar of God where it must answer for its mockeries, and for all the state of mind which rendered it possible to mock. **There will be no mockery in hell!**

Do not brave these bands. Young men, do not sit in the seat of the scorner. Do not be among the mockers. Let the mocker hear the solemn warning of the text, and repent and seek mercy through the cross, and relinquish his folly.—*J. Rawlinson.*

THE PARABLE OF THE HUSBANDMAN.

xxviii. 24, 25. *Doth the plowman plow all day to sow?* &c. (α).

Means adapted to the end must be used if any end is to be accomplished. The physician knows this. So does the general. So does the manufacturer. So does the farmer. He is not always ploughing. Nor always sowing. Nor always threshing. Nor does he treat every kind of produce in the same way. And God employs various methods in dealing with men. He aims to turn them from evil, and He adapts His methods. The teaching of the text may be applied to the divine dealing with men generally.

I. God intended to open a way of salvation. Man needs salvation because he is a sinner. Can conceive a state of things in which he would not need it, as of one who needs no physician. If he had continued holy and obedient. But that is not his case. He is a sinner, characterised by im-

purity, and exposed to perdition.—Now God, in His pitying love, would save us. How shall He proceed? Shall He, by His arbitrary will, sweep away the facts? Such a procedure would be entirely inconsistent with the existence of moral government and the rectitude of the divine character. 1. One part of the case to be dealt with was the condemned state of man under the divine law. Forgiveness could not righteously be given without some satisfaction. Man could not make it. God in Christ, in His whole personality and work, has made the satisfaction. The method adopted is exactly adapted to the nature of the case. 2. But the other part of the case was also to be dealt with. Sinfulness is deep-seated in man's nature. He loves it. Until he is changed, he is not even inclined to sue for mercy, still less to escape from sin. The Lord Jesus Christ was sent to turn us from our iniquities. How does He do this? (1.) *By moral motive.* The law was inadequate. He introduces a new motive. Not only the mercy, but the fact that it has been procured at such a cost, that the love was equal to such a sacrifice. It appeals directly to the heart, as well as to the judgment, for a condemnation of sin. (2.) *By spiritual influence.* The influence of the Holy Spirit strives with those to whom the gospel is preached, with a view to the overcoming their indifference, reluctance, and sin.—The method is adapted, in both its sides, to the end in view. It only requires the sinner's consent. Hence—

II. God intended the way of salvation to be made known to men. If consent to it and faith in it is requisite to participation of its blessings, it must be understood—1. The information might have been imparted in a separate revelation by the Holy Spirit to every man. Would supersede all evidence, and all exercise of human faculty. Would not be adapted to man as a reasonable being. 2. Angelic ministry might have been employed. Open to similar objection. Would have made miracle the rule instead of the exception. It would have changed the order of nature. 3. The method adopted is the simple arrangement that those who are acquainted with it, believe it, consent to it, make the gospel known. A method exactly adapted to the nature of the case. According to the constitution of human nature, the Gospel thus approaches it for the purpose of gaining the understanding, the heart, and the will. Bear in mind the power of sympathy between human beings. He who has received a truth desires to impart it. He who has experienced the salvation pities those who need it as he did. He who speaks from his own experience speaks with tenderness, and earnestness, and influence. The sick heed the recommendation of a physician by those whom he has cured. On this principle of adaptation the Lord Jesus instituted the living ministry of apostles, evangelists, pastors, parents, all Christians. He inspired some to put on permanent record the truth as He revealed it, as a standard of appeal. They are to study it. They are to use the same principle of adaptation. There is youth, age, different measure of instruction, different classes, spheres, circumstances.

III. God intended to train those whom He saved. Believers are already saved, because pardoned and sanctified. But they require training into riper holiness, greater usefulness, greater fitness for the future heaven. Therefore the Saviour instituted such means as are adapted to secure these ends. Church fellowship, public worship, pastoral teaching, Christian habits of watchfulness, thoughtfulness, prayer. All these are adapted to the training of the spiritual plant.

Are you in sympathy with God's end? In yourselves? In the world? Then adapt yourselves to its realisation.—*J. Rawlinson.*

In these verses there are three kinds of seed mentioned; fitches, cummin, and corn. The fitches and cummin were small seeds like the

caraway or chickpea. When these smaller herbs had to be threshed, this was done by hand; but when the corn had to be threshed, that was thrown on the floor, and men would fasten horses or oxen to a cart with iron-dented wheels; that cart would be drawn round the threshing-floor, and so the work would be accomplished. And so the idea expressed is different kinds of threshing for different products.

I. We must all go through some kind of threshing process. The fact that you are devoting your life to honourable and noble purposes will not win you any escape. Wilberforce, the Christian Emancipator, was in his day derisively called "Doctor Cantwell." Thomas Babington Macaulay, the advocate of all that was good long before he became the most conspicuous historian of his day, was caricatured in one of the *Quarterly Reviews* as "Bubble-tongue Macaulay." Norman M'Leod, the great friend of the Scotch poor, was industriously maligned in all quarters. All the small wits of London took after John Wesley, the father of Methodism. If such men could not escape the maligning of the world, neither can you expect to get rid of the sharp, keen stroke of the tribulum. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. **II. It is no compliment to us if we escape great trial.** There are men who suppose they are the Lord's favourites, simply because their barns are full, and their bank account is flush, and there are no funerals in the house. It may be because they are fitches and cummin, while down at the end of the lane, the poor widow may be the Lord's corn. You are little pounded, because you are little worth, and she bruised and ground, because she is the best part of the harvest. By carefulness of the threshing, you may always conclude the value of the grain. (H. E. I., 189–196, 3692–3695). **III. God proportions our trials to what we can bear.** The rod for the cummin, the staff for the fitches, the iron wheel for the corn. (H. E. I., 179–188, 3674–3695). **IV. God continues trials until we let go.** As soon as the farmer sees that the straw has let go the grain, he stops the threshing. We hold on to this world with its pleasures, riches, and emoluments, as though for ever. God comes along with some threshing trouble, and beats us loose. Oh, let go! Depend upon it that God will keep upon you the staff, or the rod, or the iron wheel until you *do* let go. **V. Christian sorrow is going to have a sure terminus.** "Bread corn is bruised, because *He will not be ever threshing it.*" So much of us as is wheat will be separated from so much of us as is chaff, and there will be no more need of pounding. "He will not ever be threshing it." Blessed be God for that! (Rev. xxi. 4).—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(a.) In this parable the mystery of the Divine Providence is laid open, its secret disclosed. *All ploughing is for sowing; all threshing is intended for the preservation of the grain.* When God chastens us, it is not that He means to destroy us, but because He has set His heart on saving us, because He has appointed us to life and not to death. He works with discrimination. He employs various methods, sends sorrows of all sorts and sizes, that He may adapt Himself to every man's needs, and to all our varieties of place, time, and circumstances. Just as the husbandman varies his treatment of the soil, and allots to each kind of seed a soil and place suitable to its kind; just as, after the harvest has been gathered in, he employs only such instruments as are best adapted for separating the different kinds of grain from the straw and the chaff. With like wisdom and discretion God deals with us, assigning to each of us our proper station and lot, and, when we sin against Him, adapting His judgments to our several needs. The sorrows, losses, bereavements which befall us are but as the sharp edge of the share, or the keen teeth of the harrow, and are intended to prepare us to receive the good seed, and to bring forth much fruit. Or again, they are like the stroke of the flail, or the keen pressure of the sledge, or the ponderous oppression of the waggon-wheel, or the swift rattle of the horses' hoofs; and are designed to separate the chaff from the grain, the worthless from the worthy, the evil from the good in us, that we may be made meet for the garner of God. "Cure sin and you cure sorrow," say the reason and conscience of the world: *and the sorrow comes that the sin may be cured,* adds the prophet; the very miseries that spring from evil are intended to eradicate the evil from which they spring. The weeds call for the plough:

and the plough comes at their call; but it comes and cuts up the weeds and the ground in which they have taken root, only that the seeds of wholesome herbs and herbs of grace may be sown in the furrows. The chaff calls for the flail, and the flail is sent, but sent only to beat out the nourishing grain. Would that this conception were as assured, and as familiar to us as to the old Hebrew prophets! For, sooner or later, we shall all have to endure sorrows, which rend our hearts as the ploughshare rends the ground, or which bruise our hearts as the flail bruises the corn. —*S. Cox, D.D.: Expositor*, vol. i. pp. 89–98.

A Feast for Faith.

xxviii. 29. *This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*

The sentiment of the text is that *the art, and science, and skill of man are the gifts of God.* The prophet instances only agriculture, but the same principle applies to all the arts and manufactures, and in a higher degree still to those sublimer sciences which elevate the human mind, and make us acquainted with the majestic and mysterious powers of nature. The drift of the writer of the text is this, *if God thus instructs man in wisdom, how wise must He be Himself!* If the mere rays which come from Him convey to us so much light that we are perfectly astonished at what man can do, what must be the infinite wisdom in counsel and the excellence of working which are to be discovered in God Himself! There are two things which shall occupy our attention. The first is, *the vision of God which the text presents to us;* and the second is, *the lesson which such a vision is calculated to teach us.*

I. The vision of God which is presented to us in the text. The great principle of the text is that *God has a plan, and that this plan is wonderful in itself, and is found to be excellent when it is carried out.* This is illustrated (1.) *in nature.* All creation is full of traces of design. "He weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." Nothing was made without the most accurate calculation. The stars seem cast about on the floor of heaven as men might fling at random gold-dust from their hands; yet there is not a single star whose place might be altered without mischief to the whole arrangement. In the meanest animal and minutest insect there are the most admirable contrivances to suit its habits and make its condition happy. And apparent irregularity is only undiscovered order. 2. *From providence.* The great providential operations of God are all the results of His foredetermined purpose and decree. All through human history every lover of the Lord will see that the awful wheels of Providence have worked with excellent regularity. Empires have fallen, but the truth has risen. Dynasties have perished, but immortal principles have conquered. 3. *Your own personal experience of that providence* goes to prove this with equal clearness. How often have you seen that God overrules all things for your good! (H. E. I. 4015–4022). 4. The wonderful planning of the excellent Worker is seen in *the great economy of Redemption.* How marvellous that God, the Mighty Maker, should appear in human flesh and become a man, that so fallen, sinful, miserable man might be lifted up and become the Son of God! When I see this great sight these words of Isaiah's ring with a bell-like music in my ears, "He is wonderful in counsel." 5. Then turning from Redemption itself, look at *the Gospel.* That Gospel is just the reverse of what human wisdom would advise. It is not "do and live," but "believe and live." 6. Then I might speak of God's plan and God's work *in inward experience.* The experience of every Christian is in some respects different from that of another, but it is always the result of God's plan. 7. Another illustration will be found *in the use of instrumentality.* It is a wonderful design of God to use one man in the conversion of another.

The one is benefited while the other is blessed. 8. The grandest illustration of all will be when, at last, *God's counsels shall be perfectly fulfilled.* Man shall burst forth into one mighty song, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

II. Some of the lessons from it.—1. To the unconverted: seeing His counsel is so wondrous, I would to God *you would agree to it!* 2. To the people of God: I want you *to agree to this in your own particular case.* 3. Brother workers, let us have a well-formed plan, and *let it be God's plan.* 4. When we know God's plan we *must remember to carry it out.* 5. When you are resolved to carry out God's plan, *joyfully expect singular assistance.* —*C. H. Spurgeon.*

ARIEL.

xxix. 1. *Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt.*

The word "Ariel" properly means "the Lion of God," and is elsewhere used of the great brazen altar on which the sacred fire blazed, and which might be said to devour as a lion the sacrifices presented on it to God. In our text, however, "Ariel" is used as a name of Jerusalem. The fact that David had dwelt in it is mentioned, not by way of historical reference, but as aggravating the guiltiness of the city, and as in some way proving that it might expect to be visited with more than common vengeance. In what way is the fact that Jerusalem could be described as "the city where David dwelt" a justification of the woes which the prophet was about to denounce against it? The answer is easy: *We are answerable to God for every blessing received at His hands, so that we cannot possess a single privilege which will not, if neglected or abused, be brought against us as a charge and heighten our condemnation.* This is as true of communities as of individuals; and the fact that Jerusalem had profited so little, morally and spiritually, from David's residence in it was a clear aggravation of its guilt.—1. **David had dwelt in Jerusalem as a king.** As such, his authority and his example might have been expected to have made a deep impression on the religious life of the people. Consider how powerful is the example of men in exalted stations.—2. **David had dwelt in Jerusalem as a poet.** Consider how powerful is the influence of song on national character, and how truly David's psalms were national songs. As every English child is taught loyalty by the notes of "God save the Queen," every Jewish child was instructed in piety by the well-known strains of the sweet singer of Israel. Surely if anything could have kept religion alive in Jerusalem, it would have been this writing it into the poetry, this weaving it into the music of the nation. It was like taking possession of the strings of a nation's heart, and providing that their vibrations should respond only to truth.—3. **The memory of David had long been a blessing to Jerusalem.** For his sake evil had been averted from it (2 Kings xix. 34). To pronounce a woe upon the Jerusalem or the city where David had dwelt was to tell the Jews that the conservative influence of that monarch's piety would no longer be of any avail for them; that even as children, though long spared in recompense of the righteousness of their fathers, may reach a point at which they have filled the measure of their guilt, and at which, therefore, they can receive no further favour as the offspring of those whom God hath loved; so their iniquity had reached such a height that forbearance, long manifested for the sake of the most pious of kings, was at length wearied out, and there remained no further place for intercession.

The principle involved in this passage is applicable alike to *communities* and *individuals.* 1. It is made the charge against Jerusalem that it was

the city where David had dwelt—the plain inference from this being that it was a great aggravation of the national wickedness that so righteous a prince, so zealous a supporter of true religion as David, had sat for years upon the throne of Judah. By parity of reasoning, if there have been raised up in our own country men mighty in the exhibiting and establishing truth, and if in the lapse of time we grow indifferent to the truth, and perhaps even half inclined to the errors which were exposed and expelled, will it not be made a matter of accusation against us that ours is the land in which those worthies dwelt? Suppose, for example, we were to undervalue the Reformation, suppose we were to think lightly of the errors of Popery, then might our text be regarded as denouncing special woe on ourselves—woe to England—to England, the country where Wickliffe, and Cranmer, and Ridley dwelt! For it is not to be questioned that we shall have much to answer for if, after God had raised up Reformers, and they, with incalculable labour and at incalculable cost, had cleansed our Church from the abominations of Popery, we should in any measure let go the truth and make alliance or truce with the tenets or practices of Rome. The same principle is applicable (2.) to many a parish in which some devoted minister of Christ has laboured, and (3.) to many a household in which the example and teaching of godly parents have been set at nought.—*H. Melvill, B.D.: Sermons Preached during the Latter Years of his Life*, vol. i. pp. 125–140.

DREAMING.

xxix. 7, 8. *Shall be as a dream of a night vision, &c.*

The reference in these two verses is to the threatened attack on Jerusalem by the Assyrian invasion in the reign of Hezekiah. They take us to the time the invader had taken all the other fortified places in the kingdom; and now his general, Rabshakeh, was encamped before the capital, with the confident expectation of easily taking it. It would seem as if, the requisite preparations having been made, that immense army had retired to rest, with the intention of making the assault on the next day. We can imagine them in their dreams picturing to themselves the scenes of the approaching capture, the shouting, the onset, the slaughter, the devastation, the prisoners, the booty, the triumph, the glory—scenes, however, *these* which they were destined never to witness! For, in the dead of night, the Destroying Angel went forth, and in the morning nothing remained of 185,000 of them but their lifeless corpses. So ended their dreams!

Even as the army of Sennacherib was dreaming of a conquest which had no real existence, *so are there multitudes of persons now dreaming that they are accomplishing the great object of their existence who are no more doing so than if they lay wrapped in the slumbers of the night.* I propose to speak of such persons under the three heads of PLEASURE, WORK, RELIGION.

I. PLEASURE. I am not condemning pleasure. Pleasure has its place in every human life, just as truly as work and religion. I am speaking of a life *devoted* to pleasure. Nor do I speak of the grosser pleasures—these shock us at once, others delude us—but of those whose great aim in life is to please *themselves;* who, in respect to any proposed course of action, never think of asking, "Is it my *duty?*" But what is there to show that such a life is only a dream-like substitute for real life? 1. *It leaves our best faculties unused.* Can it be believed that God made us "a little lower than the angels" that we might spend our lives in pursuits which hardly require the faculties of a man? 2. A life of pleasure is a *selfish life.* Where pleasure is the habitual object of pursuit there *must* be selfishness. Wherever

pleasure is the great object of life, *the interest of others will be held in low esteem.* 3. A life of pleasure also exposes to temptation. 4. It unfits men for another world. We shall never be ready for heaven if we never think seriously about it; and pleasure pre-eminently withdraws our thoughts from that world (H. E. I., 5059).

II. Another form of the dream is the impression that WORK, *i.e., secular occupation, is the great business of life.* Work is not to be spoken of without respect. 1. The *Bible praises work.* "Six days shalt thou labour." 2. *It keeps us from dependence on others.* 3. *It benefits those dependent upon us.* 4. It is good as enabling a man *to help his neighbours.* 5. Good as giving a man *influence* by means of the wealth it produces. 6. Good *as keeping us out of much evil.* Intemperance is usually the vice of the idle. So of other vices. But still it has its dangerous side. It shuts out the other world by the undue prominence it gives to this. It diminishes our sympathy with the suffering, and makes us unconcerned about the kingdom of Christ. Noble as work is when compared with idleness, it is not the great business of life. God did not endow us with intellect, heart, and spirit, with relations to Himself, to our fellows, and to immortality, that we might spend our lives in a practical denial of them all. A life of mere work is a dream as truly as a life of pleasure.

III. Another thing which men are apt to consider the great business of life is RELIGION. In many cases "religion" is little more than amusement; in others superstition; in others mere sentiment. There is a "religion" which is merely an affair of the intellect; another where it is hereditary, where a man follows a form of religion because his fathers did so before him. It is forgotten that religion is a life. Religious knowledge, beliefs, feelings, exercises are but the scaffolding and not the building; means to an end, not the end itself. The great end of life is not to be *religious*, but to be *good.* True religion has two sides: it first puts us right with God and then with our fellow-men. We love God first, and only then do we love man and work for his good.

The prophet tells us how the dreams of these Assyrians vanished. Even such will be the disappointment of those who are dreaming away the grand possibilities of the present life. —*B. P. Pratten, B.A.: Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii. pp. 187–191.

AWAKENED FROM THE DREAM.

xxix. 8. *It shall be even as when an hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty.*

This passage describes the disappointment of the Assyrians, whose imagination had feasted on the conquest of Jerusalem. The simile is striking. A man in extreme hunger or thirst will dream that his craving is satisfied. He awakes to feel the privation more acutely. The text may be applied to the case of a man disappointed with the world, awakened to a sense of its emptiness, concerned for his soul. There is a sense of sin, danger, need. On the day of Pentecost the awakened cried, "What shall we do?" Thus the Philippian jailor. We will address this state of mind—

I. **In words of sympathy.** The awakened solicitude is justified by—1. the value of the soul; 2. the fact of sin; 3. the reality of danger; 4. the provision of the gospel; 5. the call of God; 6. the unsatisfactoriness of neglect; 7. the flight of time.

II. **In words of caution.** 1. Beware of relapsing into indifference (H. E. I., 1479–1490). Many are awakened and anxious, but it does not endure. Herod heard John gladly and did many things. Transient impressions are like Ephraim's goodness (Hos. vi. 4). Some are excitable but fickle. When the charm of novelty

departs, their enthusiasm departs. Religion experiences similar treatment. Nor is it from yourself alone that you are exposed to this peril. You will meet with those who will endeavour to repress your earnestness. They will commend a moderate attention to religion, but will counsel you to wait until you are older, &c. A quiet, sober, decent attention to religious duties is well enough, but they cannot see the necessity for making religion the primary concern. Beware of such advisers. This is a matter in which earnestness is demanded. Keep fresh and vigorous in your mind the considerations by which you were first awakened. Salvation is either the supremely important thing the gospel declares, or it is nothing. Is the sick man too anxious for health, too attentive to the physician's directions? When the starving man has dreamed of food, does any one repress his eagerness for the reality when, on awaking, he finds it was only a dream? Beware lest either unsympathising friends or your own weakness administer the opiate that will send you back into the slumber of indifference from which you have been awakened. 2. Beware of assuming that you are converted because you are awakened. Awakening is not conversion. Conviction is not conversion; it does not necessarily end in it. Pharaoh said, "I have sinned." It is a hopeful circumstance; a step on the road; attention called to the disease; disappearance of the dream. The awakened on the day of Pentecost were directed respecting conversion. 3. Beware of finding comfort anywhere else than in the gospel. Performance of religious duties; prayers; peaceful feeling, you know not why; impression that you are forgiven. It is untempered mortar; it will not bind the walls. Nothing less than faith in Jesus.

III. In words of counsel. Comply at once with the call of the Gospel. Christ's work is all-sufficient. Faith and repentance is submission at both points. The call is—1. Gracious. 2. Immediate. Do not delay; do not wait for the Spirit nor anything else. You are a man, not a machine. You must obey the gospel. The Spirit is working with the gospel.—*John Rawlinson.*

The Futility of Fighting against Mount Zion.

(*Missionary Sermon.*)

xxix. 8. *So shall the multitude of the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.*

Nothing tends to inspirit exertion in any great enterprise so much as the certain prospect of success. Hope is the spur of action, the very life of enterprise. Hence to encourage the fearful and animate the brave in the culture of their own piety, and especially in their efforts to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer, there are given in God's Word the amplest promises of Divine help and assurances of ultimate success. But for "the sure word of prophecy," the servants of God would long since have trembled for the ark of the Lord, and have despaired of the salvation of the race. But delays to us are not delays with God. Long ago He has declared, "Yet have I set my King on my holy hill of Zion." "But we see not as yet all things put under Him." The foot of His Providence falls too soft for mortal ear to mark. While He walks on the great ocean of human affairs as Jesus walked on the Galilean sea, His footsteps leave no traces behind. But yet He never stands still. "My Father worketh hitherto." His progress is certain. In reference to the spread of His gospel it may be said, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man shall come." At His approach all opposition is fruitless, all resistance vain. Every obstacle shall vanish, as a dream is forgotten when the dreamer awaketh.

This passage suggests—

I. **The number and might of the enemies of the gospel.** It is always unwise to underrate the forces of the enemy. Injury has been done to the cause of missions by this action. Good men in the ardour of their zeal seemed to speak as though heathendom was to be won by one new crusade, and that the walls of Satan's kingdom would fall flat at a single blast of their rams' horns. But Scripture takes opposite ground, and intimates that there must be a continuous and persistent struggle. Our Great General does not conquer in a single campaign; He goes forth "conquering and to conquer." These numerous and powerful enemies of Christ's kingdom arise from our own corrupt nature; from the peculiar circumstances of the heathen world; from every class of society, and are perpetually set in motion by the powers of darkness. Though they are "the multitude of all the nations," they have one prince, "the prince of the powers of darkness." To prevent our forming exaggerated pictures of success, let us remember: 1. *That the original enmity of the human heart is always and everywhere the same.* Every sinful passion of the human heart starts up an armed enemy against Christ and His truth. If at home, after centuries of Christian work, the obstacles to the gospel are so great, how much more formidable must they be in Pagan lands! 2. *The power of Satan is at all times the same.* And if here he rules supreme in the children of disobedience, what must his power be in those heathen lands where he is so strongly entrenched in superstition, idolatry and prejudices, crimes and passions of men confederated with him since Adam fell! 3. *The world at large, in its spirit and pursuits, is decidedly hostile.* Even in our own country, how few can be looked upon as the genuine disciples of Christ, the true soldiers of the cross! How mighty the forces sent out even here against the Lord and against His anointed! This part of the earth is still in the hands of the wicked.

II. **The utter futility and certain overthrow of their projects.** 1. *Their schemes are fallacious and visionary.* "It shall be as when a hungry man dreameth." What more delusive than a dream! 2. *Their disappointment is certain.* The history of the past is against them. Past history has verified the words of the Master, "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The prophecy of the future, the course of Providence, the covenant of grace, the very progress of civilisation, but more than all the very existence of God, is against them. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice."

III. **The glory that shall arise from thence to Zion's King** (Ps. lxxii. 10, 11, 15). His wisdom will baffle all their designs, His power crush every hostile force, and His kingdom rise on the ruin of their dark confederacies (1 Cor. xv. 25).—*Samuel Thodey.*

Lip-Service instead of Heart-Worship.

xxix. 13, 14. *Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near to Me with their mouth, &c.*

The charge against the people is clear; it is that of a heartless religion, formal and full of hypocrisy. "Their fear toward me is taught by the *precept of men.*" That is, their religion is a mechanical following of human directions, instead of the spontaneous uprising of a heart inspired with the fear and love of God.

I. **The charge against the Jews in Isaiah's day.** It is twofold—the removal of the heart and the substitution of a lip-service. 1. *The removal of the heart.* God demands the service of the heart (Prov. xxiii. 26; Jer. xxix. 13). The Psalmist felt how reasonable was this demand when he said, "I will praise Thee, O Lord, with the

whole heart" (Ps. ix. 1). A man may do some things with a slack hand and yet be blameless, but to steer an Atlantic steamer in a storm, he needs the whole force of both hands. Unless our whole soul be in God's service, our worship will be thrown back upon us with the withering words, "Who hath demanded *this* at your hands?" This worthless thing! "Bring no more vain oblations." How strikingly our Lord put this principle of supremacy (Luke xiv. 26): "In every man's heart I must be supreme, or therein I cannot dwell." Infidels most ignorantly misread this passage. One of their counts against Christianity is that it frowns on family joys; while every day's facts prove that the truest Christian is the best husband, father, &c. God being first in a man's heart, that heart is humanised, its generosity enlarged, so as to take in, not only the family, but "all mankind." But some, after having given their hearts to the Lord, withdraw them from His service (Matt. xiii. 22; 2 Tim. iv. 10).

II. This charge has been true in every generation. The heart's weakness and the world's force are ever the same. This evil existed in our Lord's day (Matt. xv. 8, 9). For long years before the Reformation whole nations of Christendom presented to God a mere formal worship. And to-day, of how many congregations may the words of Ezekiel be said! (xxxiii. 31).

III. The worthless substitution presented to God. "And with their lips do honour Me." The instinct of worship is so strong within the soul that men everywhere worship something. It may be the hideous fetish of the African or the artistic statue of the refined Greek, but something the Greek and the barbarian must have. When that young mother, in the days of Solomon, arose in the morning and found a dead child by her side instead of her own living one, how severe must have been the shock! Had there been no child by her side, no dead substitute, she might have thought that her own child lived somewhere and might sometime be found. But that dead substitute at first nearly killed her by despair. It is bad to withdraw a living heart from the Lord, but to substitute a dead one is first to rob God and then wickedly insult Him (H. E. I., 5066–5070).

IV. The threat (ver. 14). The threat is that of *cherished expectations bitterly disappointed.* In times of extremity, full of confidence in the wisdom of their leaders, they shall seek light and leading, and behold nothing but darkness and folly. How often have the leaders of a nation been stricken with folly, and, like a blinded steersman, have driven the ship to destruction! "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish." Disappointment! It is only another expression about the foolish man disappointed in his false security, his house resting on the sand, and of those who "make lies their refuge, and under falsehood hide themselves." The threat is that "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." Though men may not admit that their worship is mere lip-service, and their neighbours not see their hypocrisy, yet to the eye of God

> "The painted hypocrites are known
> Through the disguise they wear."
>
> —*William Parkes, F.R.G.S.*

Two conditions under which religion is in a declining state. 1. When the ordinances of divine worship are generally neglected. 2. When the attendance on worship, however large, does not represent a religious state of mind, but is simply an outward performance. The latter was the state into which religion had fallen in Judea. The religious observances of the people were not inspired by knowledge of God's Word, but by human authority. The text—

I. Describes a great privilege. "This people draw near me." God speaks after the manner of men. When we desire to speak closely to a friend we get near him. This is coming close to God (Ps. lxxiii. 28; Heb. x. 22; Heb. vii. 19; James iv. 8). Is it

not a wonder that the Almighty permits us to draw nigh to Him? Men make it difficult for their inferiors to obtain access; but the Infinite and Eternal One makes Himself accessible to His creatures. Not only so; He has made a way for creatures stained by sin. The Lord Jesus Christ stands between God and man by virtue of His atoning death and interceding life. The guilty, condemned, utterly impure, have only to renounce their sinfulness and avail themselves of this new and living way. If there is truthfulness and sincerity, they will be welcome. In the sanctuary, in meeting for prayer, in the family, in the closet, in the round of daily duty, we may draw near to God. Do you know anything of the blessedness of this privilege? Enjoyment, comfort, purity, fitness for intercourse with men, for the battle of life, for the work of the world, do they not all come through this privilege?

II. **Points out a serious abuse** (ver. 13). Their sin was not the abandonment of worship. That is a measure of ungodliness not reached without a long process. Unsettled faith, indifference to spiritual blessings, habits of sinful indulgence, conduct to it. What multitudes have reduced themselves to this predicament? But it was not their case. They had not relinquished the ordinances of worship; they observed them. But there was a twofold defect: the heart was absent and the motive was wrong. 1. *Something was present that ought to have been absent.* "Their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men." Their piety was only out of respect for some human authority. Our Lord quoted this part of the text in His exposure of externalism as exemplified by the Pharisees of His time (Matt. xv. 9). Human authority in religion is here distinctly denounced. One man may hand the Word of God to another, but no man must impose his notions of religion on another by his mere authority. A man's religious service must be the result of his personal conviction. If he is religious because some one else is, or because it is respectable, or because it may promote his worldly interest, or because it is recognised and imposed by the authority of the state, it is not really the honour and worship of God at all, but of man. 2. *Something was absent that ought to have been present.* "But have removed their heart far from Me." God must be worshipped with the heart. Apart from the outward expression of inward reality, the movement of the lips and the utterance of the mouth are nothing. Real worship is the consent of the understanding, will, affections, to the homage which is paid by the lips. Without this they are mockery, as when one who stands in the king's presence is alienated from his allegiance.

III. **Utters a solemn warning** (ver. 14). Their religion was only the counsel of man. It was unavailing for its purpose, and would come to nothing (1 Cor. i. 19). Such worship is: 1. *Unacceptable.* God is not deceived. Realise the terribleness of being rejected. He says, "It is not the kind of worship I require." After all your wisdom (Isa. i. 11–15). 2. *Unsuccessful.* The prayers offered only by the lips are not heard. No answer comes, no blessing descends. This comes of the policy which followed the precepts of men. 3. *Unstable.* After such religion reaction may be expected. There is no inward life to sustain the outward exercises. Does not the test point to that deeper spiritual blindness which follows the attempt to put the wisdom of man in the place of the wisdom of God?

In religion and at its worship take care: 1. That there is *sincerity.* See that the heart is right with God. "Ye must be born again." 2. That there is *simplicity.* Let there be no superfluous externalism in worship; only what is necessary to the suitable expression of the heart's worship. 3. That there is *earnestness.*

And if a merely formal worship is rejected, what is the predicament of those who do not even offer that, but who live without any acknowledgment of God?—*John Rawlinson.*

THE JOY OF THE MEEK.

xxix. 19. *The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord.*

I. THE PERSONS HERE DESCRIBED.

Meekness does not mean timidity (2 Tim. i. 7); not the craven spirit of the coward, but the quiet power of the strong man (Prov. xxviii. 1). It does not mean the absence of courage, but the absence of that ignorant and arrogant self-sufficiency which Peter showed when he said, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I." It is that calmness of spirit which grows not out of reliance on self, but out of reliance on God. It is recorded of one whose courage at times had flashed up like a consuming fire, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." His meekness was not feebleness, but a calm strength; quiet endurance in the doing of duty under difficulties. He was not provoked by the wrong-headedness or irritated by the ingratitude of the nation he wished to serve, but he quietly bore their stubbornness, and persisted in doing them good against their will. Hence a quiet doing and a quiet bearing of the will of God is one constituent in this quality of the mind "meekness." It does not mean that equableness of disposition which comes from nature, so much as that calmness of spirit which comes from grace. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 23). This quality of mind in God's people is shown: 1. *In their intercourse with God.* In His presence they manifest "a humble, lowly, and contrite heart." Theirs is not the spirit of the Pharisee, but the lowly contrition of the publican. Not "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," but "I am not worthy," &c. In a ready acceptance of the doctrines of grace and salvation through a Saviour crucified. Not like the Pharisees, who scorned the Saviour "as a root out of a dry ground," but like those few elect souls, just and devout, who "were waiting for the consolation of Israel." Christianity is a discipline of humility. In making men Christ-like it makes them meek. Jesus was meek and lowly, and He promises to those like Himself rest of soul. 2. *In their submission to the allotments of Providence* (Job xiv. 14, xiii. 15; Micah vii. 9; Lev. x. 3; 1 Sam. iii. 18; H. E. I. 157, 158, &c.) 3. *In their deportment before their fellow-men.* They do not arrogate to themselves that superiority which despises and neglects others, but obey the apostolic injunctions (1 Pet. ii. 17, iii. 8).

II. THE BLESSINGS GOD CONFERS UPON THEM.

1. *He saves them.* Often in outward troubles they become the charge and care of His providence (Zeph. ii. 3). How wonderfully was Moses saved from the strivings and rebellions of the people! Leaving his vindication in the hands of the Great Judge, God took up his cause; and when the whole camp was against him, God delivered him. How wonderfully was Joseph delivered from the pit and the prison, and Jeremiah in the siege! But always are they saved from soul-destruction. "Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." 2. *He beautifies them.* "He will beautify the meek with salvation." By the robe of righteousness, the inward adorning of the soul in every virtue, by the special manifestation of His mercy when most needed (chap. lxi. 3), by giving them that esteem and commanding influence which often attracts and impresses their fellow-men. 3. *He makes it appear that He delights in them.* "The Lord taketh pleasure in His people."

III. THEIR GRATEFUL RESPONSE.

"The poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." They rejoice in His salvation; they praise Him in voice, and heart, and life (Isa. lxi. 10).—*Samuel Thodey.*

Religious Joy.

xxix. 19. *The meek shall increase their joy.*

It is commonly said that while religion is man's duty and his interest, it is not productive of enjoyment. Yet the Bible is full of joyful expressions, and of exhortations to joy. It even meets the sorrows of humanity and brings joy out of them. Its association of joy with conditions not joyful is remarkable (Matt. v. 3 – 5). Observe the contrasts in our passage (vers. 18, 19). Circumstances are mentioned which amount to the removal of all alarm (ver. 20). From the outward fact, the faith of the persons here described rises to the hand that accomplished it.

Our subject is religious joy.

I. The source whence it is derived.

"The Lord. The Holy One of Israel." We rejoice in what we have desired, hoped for, and obtained. This does not exclude enjoyment of the blessings of the present life. They are closely associated with it. They suggest it. We ask whence they come. The habit of regarding earthly advantages as gifts from the hand of God keeps the divine character before us as that of a Being to be regarded with pleasure.

Thus, if we ascend to the spiritual region and contemplate the salvation of man, it includes the compassionate love of God, which gave His Son to impoverishment, suffering, and death; full forgiveness of sin; the various influences of the Divine Spirit; the elevated spiritual privileges and hopes bestowed on fallen men. All this came from the grace of God; it originated in His nature. "God is love." But the God whose nature can be read in this way is not a God to repel, but attract; not a God of whom to stand in terrified awe, but a God in whom to rejoice.

And this result emerges if we take a more direct look at the divine character. We are supplied with verbal asseverations as well as historical illustrations. We read of the Almighty, the All-wise, the All-righteous, the All-holy, as well as the All-loving. Power, even with justice, would fail to produce joy. But a God of power, and love, and holiness can be a delight, because He can be loved.

But no object of delight can be considered apart from its subject. Nothing is universally delightful. Before you can enjoy anything you must have sympathy with it, a taste for it. There are people who cannot enjoy the finest concert. There must be the heart that is capable of joy in the Holy One of Israel, the heart of "the meek, the poor among men;" the heart changed by the grace of God.

II. The elements of which it consists.

We know our feelings better by experience than by analysis. We can imagine a father so utterly unsatisfactory in his character and conduct that his own children are ashamed to mention his name. We can imagine one whose kindness, whose faultless conduct, whose commanding intellect render them proud of his name. They think of him with pleasure. Thus the poor among men rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

If you attempt to examine, you will find that your joy in God is compounded of several other feelings, which, like tributary streams, swell with the river of your pleasure. 1. *Gratitude.* For experience of the divine goodness. It expresses itself in thanks and songs. You think with pleasure of one to whom you are grateful. 2. *Affection.* Love is closely akin to gratitude. And God has taken away all cause of alienation. The love of God in Christ possesses the heart. Love delights in its object (Rom. v. 11). 3. *Confidence.* We trust Him entirely. In present distresses or future fears. If distrust crosses our minds, we dismiss it as inconsistent with the truth of which we have satisfied ourselves.

Now if there is perfect confidence in Him on whom we depend, we cannot fail to rejoice in Him. 4. *Approbation.* We find the Holy One of Israel a Being in whom we can be infinitely satisfied. At no point, in no respect, could we desire Him to be different from what He is. Nor is it the admiration sometimes expressed for characters there is no desire to imitate. Christians earnestly desire likeness to God. Putting all these together, there must be joy in the Lord.

III. THE AUGMENTATION WHICH IT RECEIVES.

"The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord." Earthly joy is short-lived. The objects from which it proceeds are liable to change and perish. Many of them, even if they continue, fall. They become flat by satiety and continuity. We outgrow them as a child outgrows his toys. But Christian joy is permanent and tends to increase, because its object remains the same for ever, while His fulness is ever unfolding itself. Knowing and experiencing more of God, there is more joy in Him. Thus there is a constant increase—in the *present* world, and in the *world to come.*

Would you enjoy this privilege? Then make it possible. Possess the character. Ye must be born again. Do not indulge sin. Keep Christ in your thoughts. Thus you will be superior to earthly enjoyments.—*John Rawlinson.*

THE ORIGIN AND THE END OF SIN.

XXX. 1–3. *Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me, &c.*

The policy inculcated by the Divine Ruler on the Jewish nation was a policy of isolation. Now, this would be a self-destructive policy. But the circumstances of that nation were peculiar. It was not a missionary to the world, but it was a witness. When it formed alliances with surrounding nations, its witness became indistinct. It often dropped its testimony and adopted the idolatries against which its protest should have been uniform. This prophecy is against the alliance with Egypt. Assyria was about to invade that country. It was feared she would take Judea on the way. Now, the Lord was its defence; there was therefore no need to seek assistance from any other power whatsoever. It was a rebellious and unbelieving spirit that sought this alliance. The politicians sought a covering from the impending storm; but they did not seek it by divine counsel. They were adding another sin to the number against them. It would be shame and confusion at the end. Egypt would be unwilling or unable to help.

Human nature is ever the same. Here is a representation of the way in which sinners act, and of its consequences.

I. All sin proceeds from neglect and defiance of God's counsel.

1. It is implied that God has counselled or may be consulted respecting human conduct. By the prophet He had declared against the alliance with Egypt. In the written word we have His will. It does not deal with our modern life and circumstances in detail. Impossible. But we have what is better; principles of action which we are to apply to circumstances. No one ever long in a moral difficulty, if he honestly apply these principles. Every act which is of the nature of evil is forbidden. Many sinful acts are forbidden by name. We have the example of the Son of God. We have the most inspiring motives: gratitude, love, hope, fear. A revolution of our nature in the direction of God's holiness is demanded. The ministry of the word expounds and enforces these great principles. Men do not sin for want of counsel from God

2. Our text charges men with acting on other counsel than the divine. The charge is twofold. (1.) *Neglect of the*

counsel they ought to have sought. Sincere desire to be right would apply to the Divine Word in relation to all the conduct of life. How many adopt and act upon the principle that it shall guide everything? Is not its authority discounted? When tempted to the questionable or sinful, but advantageous, how many, with steady clearness of moral vision, look straight at God's counsel? As to the ministry of the Word, one part of the function of which is to keep men's moral perceptions clear, how many absent themselves from it entirely! (2.) *Seeking the counsel they ought not to have sought.* They sought counsel of their own inclinations. It was a foregone conclusion. They *wished* to go down into Egypt. If they consulted, it was, as often happens, with those inclined in the same way. Men are secretly conscious of alienation from God, which instinctively dislikes His recommendations. Man's moral nature is unhinged; and he turns from God anywhither. The maxims of the world, the opinions of associates, considerations of worldly interest, conspire to the rejection of His counsel. Micaiah must be imprisoned if he prophesy evil, although it be true.

II. Sin is cumulative and growing.

"That they may add sin to sin." Sin is rarely single (H. E. I., 4507–4509). A rope is twined from many threads. The Jewish people committed one sin by forsaking the counsel of God, another in trusting to the help of Egypt. Some substances have an affinity for each other. So have moral elements. Sins have a fearfully attractive and accumulative power. The youth wanders from the house of God. Conscience is stifled. Amusement is sought. Loose companions are cultivated. Restraint is gradually thrown off. Fraud is necessary. Fraud requires falsehood. One falsehood requires another. Sin is added to sin. Soon as a sin is committed it drops the seed of another, and so onward in terrible progression. Add grain of sand to grain until it becomes a mountain. Money is scraped together by care and labour, but sins rush to each other with mutual attraction. If you could have foreseen the growth of your own sins, surely you would have refrained. Count the sins of your life. They are added up in God's book.

III. Every sin contains the germ of its own punishment.

"Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion." Sin makes promises which it fails to perform. You are disappointed. This is part of the punishment. Punishment is often appropriate, growing out of the sin. Sometimes this is palpable, as in the case of sensual lusts. Oftener subtle. Punishment accumulates, as sin does. There is a treasuring up of wrath (H. E. I., 4603–4614). Will you continue to accumulate it? or will you pause, cease? You must repent. Do not hug your chains. You must cry for mercy. You must yield. You must repair to the cross.—*John Rawlinson.*

Strength in Quietness. (a)

xxx. 7. *Their strength is to sit still.*

There is a sense in which "sitting still" is not our strength, but our destruction. To sit still in sin and unbelief is the practice and the ruin of the unconverted. To such men, exhortations of a precisely opposite character must be addressed. There is a sense too in which there is to be no "sitting still" even for the righteous (Phil. ii. 12, 13; 2 Pet. i. 5–10; Heb. iv. 11). To understand our text, we must acquaint ourselves with the circumstances which gave occasion to it. The Israelites were under the special protection and guardianship of God. Many and great were the deliverances which He wrought for them. Yet, when in difficulty and

danger, they thought more of man's arm than of His. Now threatened by the Assyrians, where did they turn for help? To Egypt—to that very people who had once so cruelly oppressed their forefathers! To make sure of having it, they sent to Egypt large sums of money. It was in rebuke of such foolish ingratitude to God that our text was written. "Their strength," said the Lord, "is to sit still,"—to forbear, that is, from sending off for help to man, and to "sit still" quietly at home, relying on the help of God. This was their strength, for let them but do this and then they had a stronger with them than all that were against them.

To-day the believer in Christ Jesus is often tempted to a sin very similar to that of Israel, and to him this admonition is equally applicable and important. In a more especial manner than Israel of old he is hidden under the shadow of his Lord. And yet *he* also is strongly tempted, in more ways than one, to make flesh his arm, whilst his heart departeth from the Lord. He is often tempted thus to do in reference—**I. To the everlasting salvation of his soul.** Satan tempts him to look off to other confidences, as if Christ were insufficient; to look out for something in himself, which he may boast of and depend upon. But in Christ there is everything the sinner wants (Col. ii. 10; 1 Cor. i. 30). **II. To temporal difficulties and dangers.** The Christian is authorised to use all proper means for his deliverance. It would be tempting God, not trusting Him, to neglect those remedies or those precautions which He has placed within our power, and expect to be delivered by a miracle (H. E. I., 169, 170). Yet he must, in a sense, "sit still." He must place his whole dependence on his God, and not on any plans which his own prudence may suggest to him; nor must he resort to any means of safety or deliverance which would be inconsistent with the rule of duty laid down for him in Scripture (H. E. I., 171–178). *Asa*, 2 Chron. xiv. 11; *Jehoshaphat*, 2 Chron. xx. 12; *Hezekiah*, 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8. Let these worthies of old teach us what a blessed thing it is, in times of difficulty and of danger, to wait calmly upon God; using means, indeed, such as God may put within our reach, yet not abusing them by making them our staff. **III. To seasons of affliction.** Then is it most eminently true that the believer's strength is to "sit still." How is he to do so? By submitting himself patiently and humbly to the chastening rod without a murmuring word upon his lips, or a murmuring thought within his heart; by acknowledging the faithfulness and wisdom of the dispensation; and by waiting the Lord's time for the removal of it. *Job*, i. 21; *Eli*, 1 Sam. iii. 18; *David*, Ps. xxxix. 9. Not to "sit still" under the chastening rod will only make our case the worse; but he who waits upon God has a way of comfort and deliverance opened to him (Isa. xli. 10, xxvi. 3). **IV. To time of provocation.** He is affronted and injured. Shall he turn himself about to see how he may revenge himself? No; his strength is to "sit still," to forbear from recompensing evil with evil, and to commit his cause patiently and calmly to his God. David did so in more instances than one; and the Lord took up the quarrel of His servant, avenged him of his adversaries, and set him up on high above them (Rom. xii. 19–26).

In regard to all these things we must "sit still" in faith, in hope, in resignation to the blessed will of God. For the grace that is needed to enable us to do so, let us have recourse to Him who can teach us "quietness and confidence," to the spirit who gives faith and consolation, who can make the soul to rest in Christ, and say to all its troubled feelings, "Peace, be still!" —*Arthur Roberts, M.A.: Plain Sermons, Second Series*, vol. i. pp. 31–39.

(a) See also CHRISTIAN QUIETNESS, verse 15.

Dislike to Ministerial Fidelity.

xxx. 9–11. *This is a rebellious people, &c.*

Many wish to be deceived. They have made truth their enemy and shrink from the light, desiring present relief and peace, even at the expense of future happiness. Many a man does not like to be told the truth about his business or his health. The Jews did not like to be told the truth about their national prospects. The incessant reference of the prophets to the holiness of God was offensive to them, and they tried to silence their faithful monitors. Faithful ministers of Christ meet with the same reception from many of their hearers. These cannot bear to have their consciences roused, their fears alarmed, and their minds rendered uneasy.

I. The truths which are usually obnoxious to such persons. The spirituality and unbending strictness of the divine law, the deep depravity of human nature, the exceeding sinfulness of man's conduct, the universal necessity of regeneration, the inefficacy of works for justification, the indispensable obligation to a separation from the world, the holiness of God, His irreconcilable hatred to all sin, and His irrevocable purpose to punish it, and the awfulness and interminableness of the doom of the impenitent. Such subjects call up the enmity of the carnal mind. They distress those who are wrongfully at ease in Zion, and they demand that the preacher shall leave them, and discourse on more pleasing themes.

II. The cause of this dislike of ministerial fidelity. 1. *Unbelief.* Multitudes who admit in gross the authority of the Bible deny it in detail. Its unpalatable truths are rejected. 2. *The refinements of modern society and taste.* It is allowed that the curses of a violated law may be uttered in barns or churches for the poor, and may fall on the rude ears of the multitude, but the doctrine and style of preaching to the congregations of rank and fashion must be smooth and soft. 3. *Wounded pride.* Persons of outwardly blameless life hate the doctrine which disturbs their self-complacency, and revile the man who attempts to sink them in their own esteem. 4. *Painful forebodings of future misery.* Resolutely cleaving to their sins, they do not like to be reminded of the doom to which they are hastening.

III. The characteristics of this dislike of ministerial fidelity. 1. It is *foolish.* Is it wise in the victim of vice to ask the physician to tell him that he is in good health, and is carrying on a harmless course of indulgence, &c., &c.? No concealment of the situation of the sinner can alter his condition in the sight of God or change the relation in which he stands to eternity. 2. It is *sinful.* (1.) In its origin. It springs from a determination to go on in sin. (2.) In its nature. It is a love of falsehood, a desire to confound the distinction between sin and holiness. Nor is this all; in aiming to suppress the voice of warning, he acts the part of that infatuated and cruel wretch who would bribe the sentinel to be silent when the foe is about to rush into the camp, or would seduce the watchman to be quiet when the fire had broken out at midnight and was raging through the city. The attempt to induce the preacher to utter "smooth things," is an attempt to induce him to destroy himself and to contribute to the destruction of them that hear him. (3.) In its consequences. Notwithstanding the most faithful warnings, they are hurried on by it to ruin. Like infatuated Balaams, they force a passage to destruction. 3. It is *dangerous.* It leads men to close their ears to what it concerns them especially to know. It is only by a faithful disclosure of their situation that they can escape, but they will not hear it.

Application. 1. *To ministers.* (1.)

The guilt of ministers who do not discharge the duties of their office with uncompromising fidelity is indescribable. They are mere pulpit agents of the devil, receiving the wages of the sanctuary while they do his work; keeping all still and quiet among his slaves, preventing all attempts to throw off his hateful yoke by flattering them with the idea that they are the servants of God. (2.) The conversion of sinners should be the chief object of every minister of Christ. They constitute the majority of every congregation; they will soon be beyond the reach of salvation. (3.) The conversion of the impenitent must be sought by suitable means. What may be called the alarming style of preaching is most adapted to convert the impenitent. Not gross and revolting descriptions of eternal torment; these are offensive and disgusting, and generally defeat their purpose, especially when done in a harsh, unfeeling manner. But a minister's habitual preaching should be so discriminating as to leave no unconverted sinner at a loss with whom to class himself, whether with believers or with unbelievers; and it should not unfrequently contain those allusions to and descriptions of the wrath of God which, like the distant rumblings of the gathering and approaching storm, should drive men to the refuge provided by infinite mercy in the cross of Christ. (4.) It is at our peril that we soften down the terrors of the Lord to please any man; we must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God; we must stand clear of the blood of the rich as well as of the poor. Did Paul regard the feelings of Felix? 2. *To professing Christians.* (1.) Many would have the preacher confine himself to words of comfort, and object to everything searching and practical as legal. Upon their principles, all parts of God's Word but the promises are unnecessary; they are useless to believers, for they are above them by privilege; useless to sinners, for they are below them in respect to obligation. What is this but a requesting that the Holy One of Israel may cease from before His people? (2.) Inconsistent professors are likewise anxious that the preacher should confine himself to consolatory topics. Hypocrites! he gives you that which belongs to you. Consolation would be to you a deadly poison, a fatal opiate. (3.) Sometimes even those who have only the ordinary imperfections of even the best men wish to hear less of the alarming parts of divine truth. But have you no concern for the salvation of others? Besides, who can tell but what you dislike may be necessary for keeping you awake? (4.) Let those who cannot bear to hear the descriptions of future punishment think with themselves how they shall be able to endure it.—*John Angell James, Sermons*, ii. 181–214.

Christian Quietness. (a)

xxx. 15. *In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.*

The principle of our text is, that "strength," safety, success, happiness, is the fruit of self-control and of reliance upon God.

I. It requires little observation to perceive that this is so in outward things (Eccles. ii. 11). Look out upon life, and see who, in the long run, are the most successful. Is it the stirring and excitable, those who are most conspicuous in its busy competitions? No: it is for the most part the tranquil and retiring; those who make no display, and have the least reliance upon their own powers. The surest gains and the most certain advancement usually attend those who go on quietly and steadily, without grasping at what is beyond their reach, or wasting their energies in unnecessary exertion. The godly who, when they cannot engage on fair terms in the rivalry of the world, keep aloof from it, preserving peace with men, and exercising faith

in God, are provided for, and not unfrequently even raised to conspicuous prosperity. In "quietness and confidence" in God's providential care "is their strength."

II. Still more important is the application of this sacred principle to what goes on in the Christian's soul. We can further the great work of our sanctification only by acting upon it. Excitement and self-dependence can do nothing. The work which has been begun by Divine mercy must be carried out by Divine agency. We are to take heed not to throw any obstacles in the way by our rashness or despondency. If under a feeling of the importance of the work we have to do, we set about doing it *in any way of our own*, we only invite disappointment, and peril the object we have in view. Only in a dutiful and patient waiting upon God can we obtain a blessing. Not all the will-worship which was ever contrived by human ingenuity can bring us nearer heaven.

III. These words should be our guide in every difficulty and emergency of the spiritual life. They bid us give place to no anxiety or alarm. Those who act upon them cannot be fanatics, nor will they despair. They will not seek what God sees fit to deny, nor even to attain to what is excellent by equivocal means. No real strength is to be got by ferment and agitation. We may not do evil that good may come; we may not distrust God's power and willingness to help us; we may not seek help from Egypt.

IV. These words should be our guide in view of the changes and excitements of our times. Because of them many are filled with unreasonable fears. But are we to lose our patience and steadfastness because irreligious speculators and worldly religionists are in an uproar? No; let them follow their own course; let us act upon the principle of our text. Truth is safe; the Church is founded upon a rock; nothing can harm it, *but our attempting to defend it with carnal weapons.* Our weapons are the Word of God and prayer. In the use even of *them*, we must take heed what spirit we are of, that we use them not in a worldly or angry spirit. Let God do His own work. Let us not venture to step beyond ours. It is not our work to keep the world in order. With the eye of our faith fixed upon Him who with unerring wisdom and omnipotent might controls all the changes and developments of human affairs, let us quietly pursue the duties which He has assigned us, and we shall be safe, and strong, and blessed.—*J. G. Dowling, M.A.: Sermons*, pp. 55–75.

(a.) See also STRENGTH IN QUIETNESS, verse 7.

THE VANITY OF EARTHLY HELP IN TIME OF TRIAL, AND THE PROFIT OF PATIENT WAITING.

XXX. 15, 16. *For thus saith the Lord God, &c.*

The history of the Jews a striking proof of human depravity. That people at once the most favoured by God, and the most obstinate in rebellion against God. Ever hankering after some new idol, and falling into some new sin. Burden of the prophets was to reprove their pride and hardness. Isaiah no exception. In this chapter there is a solemn warning, the last remonstrance previous to Sennacherib and his army coming upon them.

First, *the insufficiency of all human dependence.* Chronic failing of the Jews was dependence on the arm of flesh. In national difficulties they went to Egypt for horses, or turned to Assyria for help, thinking that these would insure defence. But these devices always failed. God, from the first, placed His people in such circumstances that they could not fail to see that it was not human might which delivered them. Illustrate this by the Exodus, Gideon, David, and Goliath. In all this instruction for us, God is jealous of His honour. He brings to nought the works

of the wise who ignore Him, and crowns with success the efforts of the weak and foolish who trust Him.

These words were *especially addressed to the Ancient Church*, and consequently their teaching is for God's people now. We are too apt to be discouraged when earthly powers are arrayed against us, and to be elated when they are for us, in both cases placing our chief dependence on them. To do this is to lose sight of the true dignity and glory of the Church of God. The Church is the Spouse of Christ; she is gifted and dowried by Him; and does not depend for success upon the State, or any form of human help. The first preachers of Christianity were poor and unlearned men, owing all their success to the power of the Holy Ghost. We must rely upon the same force.

God teaches this lesson of dependence on Himself, not only to the Church as a whole, but to individual members. Hence He sends personal affliction, domestic trials; brings men into circumstances where human aid is of no avail. They can do nothing for themselves; nothing can be done for them. Trust in God is their only resource.

This leads to the second thought, *the profit of patient waiting on the Lord.* "Their strength is to sit still." "In returning and rest shall ye be saved." In returning from endeavours to obtain help from earthly sources. God suffers us to lean on the aid of man that we may realise its futility. Faith finds its best exercise in trial; it is also strengthened and confirmed by affliction. In such conditions, too, faith produces its richest and rarest fruit. Faith must evidence itself by works. Days of sorrow and chambers of sickness bear witness to the heroism of the believer. There are no heroes like those who suffer calmly and in secret. Many such will at the last be exalted higher than even martyrs and confessors.

The secret of patient waiting is trust in God's promises. Our waiting must be on the Lord. Such waiting disciplines and chastens us. Evil tempers are subdued. Attachment to the world is destroyed. God's Word becomes our daily bread; His presence as the breath of our life; and gradually the character is perfected, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.—*Rev. S. Robins, M.A., Dale: Miscellaneous Sermons*, p. 415.

Divine Salvation Rejected.

xxx. 15–17. *For thus saith the Lord God, &c.*

The subject treated is the proposition to seek help from Egypt against the Assyrians. Here is the divine remonstrance. It illustrates the Gospel, its treatment, and the retribution that will follow.

I. The gracious assurance.

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." God was the defender of His people. Their strength was to trust in Him. It is so still. He is the only Saviour. A divine salvation is—1. *Needed.* As much as when Sennacherib spread his hosts before Jerusalem; as much as when the children of Israel in the wilderness needed the manna, without which they must have perished, &c.; for man is sinful; and because sinful helpless. 2. *Proclaimed* (Isa. xlv. 22; Acts xiii. 38, 39). God pitied the world, and sent His Son. Jesus died. His death satisfied for sin. Therefore He is able to save to the uttermost. And willing. In the ministry of the gospel He invites *every* sinner to come to Him. 3. *Conditioned.* "Return—rest." There must be a complete change from sin; from wrong confidence to simple faith. Many examples in the Old Testament show that believing reliance on God was a surer way to deliverance than the power of man. Apostolic preaching points to faith as the link of connection between the sinner and the Saviour. The salvation is by faith, that it may be free.

II. The foolish determination.

Ver. 16. They had no faith. They looked to human helpers. It is the tendency of man. And thus the gospel is set aside. 1. By *negligence.* Because of prevailing unbelief spiritual blessings are undervalued. Sin is loved. There is little moral earnestness. Acceptance of the Gospel is postponed as if it were some disagreeable duty. 2. By *contempt.* The horses on which they said they would ride point to Egypt as their strength. It was contempt of God's help. Thus their fathers had turned to the golden calf. Thus some turn to money, some to earthly pleasures, some to the Church, some to the priest for salvation. Anywhere rather than to the Saviour Himself. 3. By *self-confidence.* Ceremonies of religion are performed; prayers offered; obedience rendered; alms given with a view to propitiate the divine favour and obtain salvation as a debt. It rejects the truth of the Bible. It proceeds from ungodliness, pride, and unbelief.

III. THE DREADFUL CONSEQUENCE. Ver. 17. All your confidence will break down. You will be utterly ruined. It will be as when a great power collapses. So shall it be with sinners (Ps. lii.; Jer. xvii. 5, 6). So with sinners who reject the Gospel. There will be—1. *Complete failure.* You will be left in your original helplessness; at the mercy of the enemy; at the mercy of your sins. 2. *Signal punishment.* For the criminality is most aggravated. You have insulted God by flinging back His offered hand. Mark *the means* by which punishment will come. By the very things you have trusted. Mark *the manner* in which punishment will come. It will be utter ruin. Mark *the end* your punishment will serve. It will be a beacon to warn others against your fate. Instead of trusting in any other help, fly to Jesus. Believe in Him. He gives the weary rest. You shall be saved, now and for ever.—*J. Rawlinson.*

WAITING, DIVINE AND HUMAN.

XXX. 18. *Therefore will the Lord wait.* (a)

A promise clear and precious in itself may gain in force and value when it is viewed in its surroundings. The diamond may be sparkling and brilliant, but we prefer it in its setting. The rose by itself is lovely, but we would rather have it with the green leaves around it. We have an instance in the first chapter of this book, where, after exposing the hypocrisy, formality, and wickedness of the people in the most withering words, God suddenly exchanges the stern tone of threatening for the sweet accents of mercy, *Come now, and let us reason together.* Another example is found in Matt. xi., where our Lord, after pronouncing His solemn woes, and asserting the Divine sovereignty, in the very next sentence utters His tender invitation, *Come unto Me.* The still small voice of mercy is all the sweeter and more welcome because of the thunders by which it is preceded. The same rapid transition may be observed in the passage before us. Cast your eye over the preceding context, and you find the saddest picture ever drawn of human perversity. What a heavy indictment (vers. 9, 10). How terrible the sentence pronounced (vers. 13, 14, 17). Is it at once carried into execution? No. *Therefore will the Lord wait.* Wait for whom—for the humble, the repentant, the submissive? No; for the sinful, the trifling, the scoffing. This mingling of grace and truth is very striking. As the play of the lightning is more brilliant during the darkness of the night, so God's mercy shines out most gloriously through the murky night of man's sin. As the colours of the rainbow are most vivid when it rests on some black cloud or frowning cliff, so heaven's grace is seen to best advantage on the background of human guilt.

I. GOD WAITING FOR MAN. 1. His waiting is *real and earnest.* It is

waiting—is not a passive loitering; but carries with it the idea of earnest expectation and desire. And so while God waits, He plies you with warm entreaties and loving invitations, with stern threatenings and glowing promises; He seeks to win you by the shadow as well as the sunshine which He throws alternately across your path. "*God* waiting?" you ask. Why does *He* wait? Can He not subdue sinners by His power and compel them to serve His purpose, as the potter moulds the plastic clay? You forget that you are a free agent. Spirit is not matter. God will not shatter the door closed against Him, and if He is to enter it must be with your consent. It is true that the Lord opens the heart, but a forced submission would be no submission at all. God's waiting, then, is real; it is no figure of speech; and when we think of it, is He not far greater in His marvellous patience than in ruling countless worlds?

2. God waits as a *God of grace*, "that He may be gracious unto you." Grace is free, unpurchased favour, conferred independently of anything in us, or anything we can do (H. E. I., 2303; P. I., 1524).

3. God waits as a *God of law*. "The Lord is a God of judgment." There must not only be grace, but truth as well. God can only forgive sin in consistency with His justice. In our ignorance we think of pardon as the removal of a grudge, the overlooking of an insult, but this loose view keeps justice out of sight. Would you accept a pardon which would degrade the character of God, represent Him as a lawless being conniving at the very sin He forgives, shake the foundations of His throne, and subvert the interests of truth and holiness in the universe? Sin is no such light thing lightly forgiven. Only through the sacrifice of Christ can remission of sins be righteously bestowed. "The Lord is a God of judgment."

4. This waiting is *God's highest exaltation*. "He will be exalted that He may have mercy upon you." In showing mercy to the sinful God's glory is made great, and the sin which is so hateful and deplorable has furnished occasion for the rich display of His mercy. War is a great evil, but where would be the courage of the soldier, and the heroic deeds which have been enshrined in song, if there had been no war? And so, had sin never existed in the world, we could never have witnessed those marvellous exhibitions of God's mercy that fill us with wonder and praise. Where sin abounded grace much more abounded.

II. MAN WAITING FOR GOD. "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." We have seen how He waits for us to be gracious unto us, to be exalted in having mercy upon us, and we should wait in humble faith to receive these priceless blessings, bringing our empty vessels that they may be filled. The *blessedness* of so waiting is set forth in numerous passages of Scripture. What entire satisfaction and peace do they enjoy who take this attitude of soul described as waiting on the Lord! In waiting for man we are often disappointed and deceived, but how can we ever exhaust the Divine mercy and goodness? O happy soul that waits for God, and rejoicing in the plenitude of His goodness sings,

> "I must have all things and abound
> Since God is God to me."

If God had not first waited for us, we never would have waited for Him. He took the initiative. Why should any of us keep God waiting longer? Are your sins too great? Have you been proud and rebellious? It is precisely to such the promise is made. God is waiting *now* to be gracious, but the day of grace will soon be past.—*William Guthrie, M.A.*

Amidst the severest threatenings of Divine punishment of sin we find assurances of Divine willingness to exercise mercy. Here is still the question of the alliance with Egypt. In the foregoing verses the prophet

points out its real weakness and danger. In the text he assures the people of the Divine readiness to forgive and restore if they will return to God as their true confidence and defence.

This truth is brought out more fully when the light of the Gospel is thrown upon it. Man is sinful. Some scarcely see this, because they have never examined the law. Some admit the truth of universal depravity, but lose themselves in the crowd. Some have a sense of sin which causes anxiety, from which they see no escape. Others find rest and comfort on inadequate and delusive grounds. Now we need not merely peace. That solicitude is put to rest does not prove that a man is safe. He may sleep when his house is burning. He may have taken what he considered precautionary measures without informing himself as to the measures that were necessary, or even in disregard of competent advice on the subject. We should find peace in God's way. Consider the text in the light of the Gospel. It is full of encouragement, but it implies a caution.

I. It intimates that there is a provision on account of which God can exercise grace. 1. It is not His arbitrary will which pardons sin without regard to anything beyond His own pleasure in the happiness of His creatures. He considers the whole race. If He exercise mercy toward one without an adequate satisfaction, why not toward all? But this would amount to condonation of all sin—would annihilate the distinction between the consequences of good and evil. If God is gracious, it must be in such a way as that no injustice is done.

2. Well then, you say, we must reform; there must be repentance. And this is true when properly understood. But it is not true if it means that God may be gracious to men on the ground of their repentance and reformation. The analogy between an earthly father and God as a Father is often drawn so as to overlook the fact that He is a moral governor, and that public justice is concerned in His transactions with men. A father may forgive his child's offence on his repentance, because it is a matter purely between themselves. When the offender repents, the demands of the case are met. But an offence against public law is different. A thief or a murderer confesses his guilt, professes repentance and determination never to repeat his crime; is the law satisfied? Would any one say he ought to be forgiven? Now, sin is not only an offence against God, but against public law, for which repentance is no satisfaction (H. E. I., 4225-4228).

3. Nor is present obedience a ground to rest upon for the obliteration of past sins. The best obedience of the best fails to satisfy the present. "How can I tell when I have done enough?" asked Dr. Johnson on his dying bed. And even if you did enough to satisfy the present demands of the law, how could that avail for the removal of previous criminality? Something more satisfactory than human expedients is required (H. E. I., 375, 376).

4. That something is found in the Gospel, in the gracious provision God has made for the exercise of mercy without infringing on the rectitude of His government. It is in the gift of His Son. The love of God sent the Son of God in human flesh to obey and suffer. On the ground of His vicarious offering as the atoning sacrifice, pardon and peace may be obtained. With it justice is fully satisfied.

II. The text intimates that God is desirous to exercise grace.

It is not simply willingness. He is profoundly desirous of this result. "He wishes all men to be saved." "He is not willing that any should perish." This truth may be gathered:

1. *From His revealed nature.* He does not delight in the infliction of punishment, even when it is required by the ends of justice. His tender love longs to see the sinner avail himself of the opportunity that is afforded, and seek the offered grace (Exod. xxxiv. 5–7).

2. *From the provision of the Gospel.* There was no obligation on Him to provide this grace. It was His love. It was provided at a cost that was the best possible guarantee of sincerity. Having made such a provision at such expense, will He be indifferent to the issue?

3. *From the invitations of the Gospel.* The way of salvation is proclaimed as a royal message of grace to all mankind. It is not a cold statement of the fact that a channel of grace has been opened. It is accompanied by calls and invitations. Will God mock them by invitations of which He does not desire their acceptance?

4. From the attitude which He here represents Himself as having assumed, He waits for sinners that He may be gracious. He is like the father of the prodigal son, who doubtless waited long and anxiously for the prodigal's return because He wanted to forgive him (H. E. I., 2328–2340).

And this is the answer to the question, For what is He waiting? Why cannot He be gracious at once?

III. The text implies that grace can only be exercised when its conditions are accepted.

Should He bestow it on all? In their sins? The case stands thus: God has done His part in providing mercy; there is a part for man. What is it? To consent. To confess the sin with conviction, humility, sorrow. To accept the mercy by sending up the believing cry. To surrender to God as the rebel submits to his prince and returns to his allegiance (H. E. I., 240).

This is what He waits for. When it occurs He is gracious. And how long will He wait? Not for ever. He is in the attitude of one who has determined to wait a given time, during which the opportunity is afforded. "Seek ye the Lord *while He may be found.*" Why should you not? Why so unwilling?

Let not the love of sin nor deadness to spiritual things hold you back. Refusal to seek His grace is determined resistance of His authority and His love (H. E. I., 4247, 4248).—*J. Rawlinson.*

(a.) In these outlines the Authorised Version has been followed, but the translations in which Delitzsch, Kay, and Cheyne substantially agree is noteworthy and worthy of study. "*And therefore*—because your sins require this chastisement—*the Lord will wait*, in resolute self-withdrawal, looking for the time when your penitence will permit Him to be again *gracious unto you: and therefore will He be exalted*, in judicial severity (ch. v. 16; Ps. xlvi. 10), *that* ('when He seeth thy power is gone,' Deut. xxxii. 36) *He may have mercy on thee* (Deut. xxx. 3)."—*Kay.*

"*And therefore will Jehovah long till He can be gracious unto you, and therefore will He wait in stillness* [*or, be on high*] *till He can have compassion upon you, for Jehovah is a God of righteousness; happy are all those that long for Him!*"—*Cheyne.*

Mr. Birks thus comments: "Vers. 18–26. These verses, from the whole context, refer to the Assyrian deliverance. The connection is direct and forcible, though some have thought it obscure. However severe God's discipline, its design was gracious. His dealings are full of wisdom, like our Lord's absence during the sickness of Lazarus, to make the blessing afterwards more glorious and Divine. There is, on His part, no slackness or indifference, but the calm waiting of an ever-patient love. Even in the hour of judgment God will be exalted, not to crush His people with the terrors of His majesty, but only '*that He may have mercy*' upon them. He knows how to temper their afflictions, that they may yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Since He waits in patient love to show them favour at the last, they also are bound to wait, in faith and patience, until the blessing shall come."

WAITING FOR THE LORD.

XXX. 18. *Blessed are all they that wait for Him.*

I. What is meant by waiting upon the Lord? Not that sitting still and biding our time, like a man waiting for a coach. Not that we are to sit in quiet, idle supineness, expecting the Lord to come and fill our souls with joy and peace, as He used to fill the tabernacle with His glory. Yet, because they cannot convert their own souls, and sanctify their own hearts, thousands rashly conclude that they must quietly wait until the Lord work

a miracle for them and save them. The Bible declares our helplessness in order *that we may be stirred up to seek help from God* (Eph. v. 14; Phil. ii. 12, 13; 2 Pet. ii. 10). What do we mean when we engage a servant to wait upon us? Not that he is to compose himself to sleep until we signify that we want him; but that he should attend upon us, hold himself in readiness to do our bidding, make himself acquainted with our rules and conform to them, and with our wishes, and do his best to obey them with all readiness, cheerfulness, and faithfulness. So when the Lord bids us "wait for Him," He means that we should diligently seek His face, inquire into His laws, keep His statutes, and walk in His ordinances, expecting to receive, in His own good time, the blessings which He has promised to those who "wait upon Him."

II. **How are we to wait for the Lord?** 1. We must wait upon God *with the heart;* we must be in earnest. *We* have no respect for the attentions and fair speeches of our fellow-men when we have reason to believe them mere idle compliments: will God accept from us what we scorn to receive from one another? (Jer. xiii. 13). 2. We must wait *entirely* upon God, whether we are in search of peace, strength, or happiness (Ps. lxii. 15). 3. We must wait upon the Lord *patiently* and *perseveringly.* He is the rewarder of all them "that *diligently* seek Him;" but He has never pledged Himself either to the time when, or the mode in which, He will answer our prayers. He may put our sincerity to the test by keeping us waiting for some time; but we shall never wait in vain (Ps. xl. 1). Remember how long Abraham had to wait for the fulfilment of the promise of a seed; but in the end, through faith and *patience,* he inherited the promise (Gal. vi. 9).—*E. Crow, M.A.: Plain Sermons,* pp. 120–136.

Change and uncertainty mark all things here. The wisest plans often baffled, the fairest prospects blighted. But the truths and blessings of the Gospel are not subject to this law of uncertainty. God's schemes are never frustrated; His promises never broken.

I. THAT DEVOUT EXERCISE OF MIND HERE COMMENDED. "Waiting for God." 1. His people wait *in the exercise of earnest and believing prayer.* They seek Him in the means of His own appointment; by that sort of diligent seeking which is opposed to that of the slothful (Prov. xiii. 4). 2. His people wait *in holy expectation of blessings in providence and grace.* It is the patient waiting for the performance of the promise in the exercise of faith. It implies a knowledge of God,—a confidence in Him,—a rest in His promises, as of a child in a father; a servant in a master (Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2). 3. *They wait for a clearing up of perplexities in the Divine Government.* Oftentimes in their own history and in the history of others, God's providence bears a mysterious and perplexing aspect. But the believing soul says, "All will come right at last. What we know not now we shall know hereafter" (H. E. I., 4043–4048).

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF SUCH WAITING FOR GOD. 1. The very exercise of prayer, faith, and patience is *a culture of the soul.* In such culture there lies "Blessedness." 2. Theirs shall be the *blessedness of satisfaction.* Disappointment meets man in every walk of life, but those who trust in the Lord's Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness shall never "be ashamed."—*Samuel Thodey.*

I. God's appearances on account of His people are sometimes delayed. 1. In answering prayer. 2. In relieving them in their afflictions. 3. In explaining Himself in regard to their afflictions. 4. In affording the joys of His salvation and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. II. Your duty in the meantime: it is to wait for Him calmly, patiently, expectantly. III. The blessedness that will attend the exercise of waiting for Him.—*William Jay: Sunday Evening Sermons,* pp. 319–324.

God's Readiness to Listen to the Needy.

xxx. 19. *He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry.*

I. **There are persons before me for whom this gracious assurance is particularly suitable.** It is most comforting—

1. *To all afflicted people.* You are depressed; things have gone amiss; you do not prosper in business, or you are sickening in body, or a dear one lies at home pining away. In your straits possibly you may be ready to try some wrong way of helping yourself out of your difficulties. Yield not to Satan. There is help in God for you now. The Lord is not now visiting you in wrath; there is kindness in His severity. By yielding yourself to God, and trusting Him in this your evil plight, you will obtain deliverance (ver. 15).

2. *To those who are troubled on account of sin.* In order to escape from sin and punishment, the very first thing with you is to come back to your God whom you have offended, since He alone can pardon you. There must be a turning of the face in repentance, and a looking of the eye by faith unto God in Christ Jesus, or you will die in your sins (H. E. I., 1479–1484). The natural tendency of your heart, even when under a sense of sin, will be to keep from the Lord. Alas! you will look at your sin again and again till you are ready to pine away in despair, but you will not look to Christ Jesus and be saved. Possibly you may conclude that there is no hope for you in better things, and that therefore you had better enjoy such pleasures as may be found in sin, and take your swing while you may. Do not believe this lie of Satan. There is hope; you are in the land of mercy still. You need do nothing to make the Lord propitious, He is love already; you need not undergo penance, nor pass through grievous anguish of spirit in order to render God more merciful, for His grace aboundeth. Therefore we say to you, Go to Him and test Him, for He will be gracious to the voice of your cry.

3. *To backsliders filled with their own ways,* who are alarmed and distressed at their grievous departures from God. You may well be grieved, for you have done much dishonour to the name of God amongst the ungodly; you have pierced His saints with many sorrows. If you were cast off for ever as a traitor and left to die as a son of perdition, what could be said but that you were reaping the fruit of your own ways? Yet the text rings in your ears at this time like a clear silver bell, and its one note is grace. "He will be very gracious unto thee" (Jer. iii. 14; H. E. I., 424).

4. *To all believers in Christ who are at all exercised in heart;* and we are all in that condition at times. Even when by full assurance we can read our title clear to-day, we become anxious as to the morrow. If trials multiply, how will faith be able to stand? When the days of weakness arrive, what shall we do in our old age? Behind all stands the skeleton form of death. "What shall we do in the swellings of Jordan?" We recollect how we ran with the footmen in our former trials, and they wearied us, and we ask ourselves, "How shall we contend with horsemen?" When standing, as we shall, on the brink of eternity, will our religion then prove a reality, or will our hope dissolve like a dream? Such questions torment our souls. Let all such fears vanish. In child-like confidence come to God, and go no more from Him. Let this verse smile on you, and beckon you to your Father's heart.

II. **The assurance here given is very firmly based.** It rests—1. *On the plain promise of God* as given in the text, and in many similar declarations scattered all over the Scriptures. 2. *On the gracious nature of God.* It is His nature to be gracious. Judgment

is His strange work, but He delighteth in mercy. Nothing pleases Him more than to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin when we lie humble and penitent before Him. 3. *On the prevalence of prayer.* This we know, an experience of eight-and-twenty years has proved that God heareth prayer; therefore we say to you, Go to Him and test Him, for He will be gracious to the voice of your cry.

III. The well-confirmed assurance of the text should be practically accepted at once. 1. *Let us renounce at once all earth-born confidences.* What is your confidence? Your wealth? Your strong common-sense? Your stalwart frame? What are you relying on? Will it support you in death? Will it stand you in good stead in eternity? It will not if it be anything short of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us flee from all creature-confidence as from a filthy thing, for it is base to the last degree to be trusting in another creature and putting that creature into the place of its Creator. 2. *Refuse despair.* 3. *Try now the power of prayer and child-like confidence in God.*—*C. H. Spurgeon: Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. xxiv. pp. 337–348.

The Bread of Adversity.

xxx. 20, 21. *And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, &c.* (a)

I. Difficulties supposed.

"The Bread of Adversity" was a proverbial expression among the Jews (1 Kings xxii. 27: Ps. lxxx. 5). The *Lord* gives: He who gave the cup of salvation gives the cup of affliction. He who gives the bread of life gives also the bread of adversity (Heb. xii. 6.) Recollect that the Lord who gives you the bread of adversity gave His own Son no better fare, no richer diet.

II. Consolations promised.

"Yet shall not thy teachers be removed," &c. He will compensate temporal troubles by spiritual blessings. Numbers have found that as tribulation abounded, consolation abounded by Christ (1 Cor. i. 5). Such consolations are threefold. 1. *A free access to God's throne.* "He will be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry." Prayer relieves distress. 2. *A faithful administration of God's word and ordinances.* Religious instruction shall be continued, "thy teachers shall not be removed." 3. *A gracious direction of God's providence.*

III. Instructions suggested.

1. *Guard against whatever may endanger Christian privileges.* Neglect of prayer; absence of love; seductions of the world. 3. *Recollect what is needful to give this promise full effect*—the influence of the Spirit. Pray for and expect a baptism of the Holy Ghost. 3. *Commend to others the consolations you receive.* Visit the sick; remember the widow and the fatherless. In comforting others, your own bread of adversity shall be made sweet.—*Samuel Thodey.*

I. A calamity anticipated.

Affliction may be continuous and severe. Bread and water are the prominent things in the sustenance of life. Day by day received. Few, if any, are entirely exempt from affliction. Periods of difficulty and privation, when weeks and months of consuming anxiety are experienced. Losses which seriously incommode and cripple their business. Troubles in the family, sometimes from the conduct of those most loved. Bereavements which rend the heart. Sickness, accident, consuming disease, and excruciating pain wear life slowly away.

The godly are not exempted. The infected atmosphere may poison the saint as well as the sinner. If a good man falls over a precipice he will be killed. "The same hurricane may equally swamp the vessel which is filled with pirates and that which is filled by a band of devoted missionaries." If a Christian neglect his business, or conduct it on unsound prin-

ciples, he must expect insolvency. He may conduct it with perfect commercial wisdom and care, and yet be overtaken by disasters from causes beyond his control.

But it does not happen by chance. There is no such thing as fate. We recognise the hand of the Lord. "Though *the Lord* give you the bread of affliction and the water of adversity." In this truth is help for believers perplexed by the mystery of sorrow. It throws their thoughts on God. And they have such confidence in Him that it is a resting-place. We do not know, we never can know, the evils He prevents. When He permits or sends trouble we may rest assured that there is a sufficient reason (Lam. iii. 33).

What are the reasons? (*β.*) We may mistake their application, but they are such as these: 1. It is sometimes *punitive*. God has established a connection between sin and suffering. The former always works towards the latter. The chain of connection may be so subtle, and may extend so far back, that we cannot follow it. Yet such a chain there is. When affliction comes, it is useful to trace the chain, and ascertain, if we can, wherefore the Lord is contending with us. 2. It is sometimes *corrective*. He deals with us as men deal with their children (Heb. xii. 5–11). It is not that he may vent His anger, but recall them to their better selves. He means it as the refiner means the fire into which he casts the gold (Ps. cxix. 67). 3. It is sometimes *auxiliary*. The means to an end. The dark way into light. It is necessary to some advantage which could not be reached without it. Joseph's slavery and imprisonment were the steps to his subsequent greatness. Jesus reached the crown by the cross. Perhaps you can illustrate from your own experience.

Meantime, here is

II. AN ANTIDOTE PROMISED.

Their teachers had been removed. The prophets were persecuted (verses 9, 10). Jeremiah, Zedekiah, under Jezebel's persecution. Obadiah had hid a hundred in caves. Persecution usually fastens on the teachers as most prominent. Thus Apostles. Thus the Nonconforming clergy in England. Thus the missionaries were driven from Madagascar. But the promise here is that they shall regain their liberty. And this will be not only a relief to themselves, but an antidote to the people's calamities. It will secure: 1. *Instruction*. "Thy teachers." Truth is the basis of everything in experience or practice. It is their business carefully to unfold and apply the truth (*γ*). 2. *Consolation*. Christian ordinances are consolatory. There are truths that bear on troubles. The views of the Divine character and of the course of Providence exhibited in the Gospel sustain and comfort. 3. *Direction*. There is danger of turning to right or left. So many allurements, from ignorance, misguidance, temptation. By the ministry you hear the voice which points out the way, invites steadfastness, warns against divergence.

God provides guidance in the journey to the better land. Value the ministry of the word. Attend it. Follow its teaching.—*J. Rawlinson.*

(*α.*) The Authorised Version, upon which these outlines are founded, is supported by Mr. Cheyne, who translates: "*And though the Lord give you bread in short measure and water in scant quantity*," &c. But Delitzsch, Kay, and Birks render the first clause: "And the Lord will give you bread in your adversity and water in your affliction." Mr. Birks adds: "These words form part of a promise, not its limitation. The affliction has been fully denounced before. Here they are assured that, although besieged, they will not be given over to famine. The path of duty will be made plain by God's prophets, and speedy deliverance be given."

(*β.*) H. E. I., 56–115.

(*γ.*) The Christian Church requires a teaching ministry. Not only must the Gospel be proclaimed to the world, the Church must be trained into knowledge, experience, holiness, activity. Individual study of Scripture is largely useful. But regularly recurring religious services, of which careful instruction is a part, are universally necessary. Godly men must be released from secular business, trained, set apart to the study and ministry of the word. The living voice of the preacher helps

guides, confirms, and gives greater practical influence to the private reading of Christians. Even under the old dispensation, large use was made of this method. There were schools of the prophets. A few were so eminent that they have left their words behind them. But there were many whose names have not survived their time. Jesus trained His disciples for their future work. After His Ascension, He gave various gifts to men for the work of the ministry. He continues them. While one could wish that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that He would put His Spirit upon them, so that they would work to the full extent of their ability for the world's salvation, it remains true that the strength of the Church is in an able, well-instructed, godly, and earnest ministry.

Among the blessings here promised to the ancient Church is the restoration of its silenced teachers to their work after its period of discipline.—*Rawlinson.*

The Guiding Voice.

xxx. 21. *And thou shalt hear a voice behind thee, &c.*

This may be a promise to God's people of the continuance of the services of the ministry, or of the additional blessings of spiritual suggestions to guide them in the path of duty.

I. It may be a continuation of the promise in the preceding verse: "Thy teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers, *and* thine ears shall hear a word behind thee." The Word of God proclaimed by faithful ministers follows men. Sometimes, as they listen to it, they reject it, but it pursues them, and gives them no rest until they obey it. When they are bent on a wrong course, it haunts them until they are recalled to duty. Or it stimulates them to the performance of duties they are neglecting or performing sluggishly. Thus understood, we may see that in this promise God compares Himself as it were to a shepherd, who puts his sheep before him; or to a schoolmaster who will have his scholars in sight, that so he may the better keep them in order.

Thus understood, we see our duty. It is to give reverent heed to the Word of God as proclaimed to us by His ministers. Food, however choice, is no blessing to us unless it be eaten and digested; and the Word of God is no blessing to us, except there be an ear to hearken to it, a spiritual taste to relish it, and a heart to close and comply with it. Well is it with those who imitate Lydia (Acts xvi. 14). But neglect of God's word shuts against us even the throne of grace (Prov. xxviii. 9). To those who disregard what they know to be the voice of God, there comes a time when they discover that the greatest of all calamities is to have their voice disregarded by Him (Prov. i. 24–26).

II. But the promise may be that of an additional blessing, the inward motions and suggestions of the Holy Spirit. His voice may be called "a word behind us," because—1. Of its secresy (Job iv. 12). 2. Because it follows us always, as constantly as our shadow. Parallels to this promise we find in 1 John ii. 20, 27; John xiv. 26, xvi. 13.

III. This voice His people hear when they are about to wander, or have wandered from the way of righteousness. From that way it is easy to depart; but God loves His people, and cannot abide to see them miscarry, and therefore He counsels them. "This is the way, walk ye in it," is sometimes a word of correction and reformation, in case of error; sometimes a word of instruction and direction, in case of ignorance; sometimes a word of strengthening and confirmation, in case of unsettledness.

In all these respects God's people hear the "word behind them," sometimes giving them very gracious hints concerning the affairs of this present life, but more frequently concerning the spiritual life. Those who wait upon God shall not lack counsels concerning the manner in which they are to serve Him. He answers the prayers of His people (Ps. xxv. 4, 5; lxxxvi. 11; cxliii. 8).

What a great comfort and encourage-

ment we have here! If we really desire to serve God amid all the labyrinths and uncertainties of this present life, we shall be safe, for He will guide us.

IV. But how may we know whether the word behind us is the voice of God, and not merely one of our own fancies, or a suggestion of Satan's? There are several touchstones by which every "word" may and should be tested. 1. The word within is to be compared with the word without. Every suggestion is to be examined by the rule of Scripture. God never speaks in the conscience contrary to what He speaks there, for He is unchangeable and cannot contradict Himself (Isa. viii. 20). 2. God's "words" are orderly and regular; they keep men within the compass of their callings, and the place in which God has set them. They incite us not to forsake our duty, but to be faithful in it. 3. They are ordinarily mild, gentle, seasonable; they are not ordinarily raptures, but such as leave a man in a right apprehension of what he does, and capable of reflection upon it. 4. They are discernible also from their effects, and the ends to which they tend. All the hints and motions of God's Spirit tend to make us better, and to carry us nearer to Himself in one way or another. Honestly using these tests, we shall learn promptly and surely to discern the voice of God's Spirit when He says to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

V. From all this two duties plainly arise. 1. *Thankfulness.* A faithful monitor is a very great advantage; it is so betwixt man and man, and we should bless God that He condescends to be this to us. 2. *Obedience.* To His infallible, loving counsel we should give prompt heed, especially as He not only points out the way, but is always ready to help us to walk in it; and the way in which He would have us go is the only one that leads to true happiness and lasting peace. Disobedience exposes us to manifold dangers, such as (1.) God's future silence; when His counsels are repeatedly rejected, He will cease to speak. What a terrible calamity (1 Sam. xxviii. 5). (2.) Those who hearken not to the voice of God in them are often given up to Satan, and their own corruptions bear sway within them (Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12).—*Thomas Horton, D.D.:* 100 *Select Sermons*, pp. 298–304.

I. Our need of the guidance here promised. We are ignorant of the way to true happiness, and we have not always daylight. The path is narrow, and is sometimes very intricate. It lies through an enemy's country. Many as wise as we have lost their way, and, after years of sorrow, have perished miserably. We need this guidance in youth, in manhood, in old age, even unto death (P. D. 952, 2388).

II. Some of the means by which God guides His people. The promise in our text suggests a traveller in doubt as to the course he should take, pausing perplexed at cross roads, and in danger of choosing a wrong one, when a friendly voice behind him is heard, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." God thus speaks to His people. 1. By His *providences.* Afflictions are often monitions and instructions (H. E. I., 66–70). 2. By His *Word.* It clearly marks the path to heaven. 3. By our *conscience* (H. E. I., 1291, 1304, 1308–1312). 4. By His *Spirit;* by whom conscience is quickened, our understanding cleared of delusions, our attention fixed on the happy career of the righteous, and the disastrous end of the wicked.

III. What is needed to enable us to profit by this promise. 1. A prayerful spirit (ver. 19). 2. A studious eye that will look for the waymarks, especially for the footprints of Jesus. 3. A listening ear. 4. An obedient habit of mind (1 Sam. xv. 22; P. D., 1656). Disregard of the Guiding Voice will involve us in present disaster and misery, and in eternal woe. Heedfulness of it will ensure for us present safety and peace, and eternal blessedness.—*Samuel Thodey.*

Rivers of Waters.

XXX. 25, 26. *And there shall be upon every high mountain, &c.*

These are symbols of the blessings God will confer upon His people when He returns to them in mercy. These are vivid presentations of two characteristics of these blessings, their copiousness and their universality. 1. To express their COPIOUSNESS the prophet speaks not of streams merely, but of rivers; "rivers and streams of water;" and declares that they shall be poured forth, not merely as the light from the sun, but as if the light of seven days were concentrated in one (α.) 2. To express at once their copiousness and their UNIVERSALITY, He declares that the rivers and streams shall run on the hills and mountains, yea, upon *every* hill and mountain (β.) The idea of universality is involved also in the figure of sunlight (γ.)

Have these promises been fulfilled? Yes. 1. *When the Gospel was given to the world.* Its messengers were sent forth into every land, and it is a small thing to say that the light it gave was sevenfold that which the most enlightened of the heathen had possessed. 2. *In the experience of every believing soul.* The Gospel reaches many who seem utterly beyond any saving influence; and when it does really reach a man, is received into his heart. It gives him a light of more than sevenfold brightness and value as compared with the best of the lights he before possessed—reason and conscience (δ.) 3. It is fulfilled in our own day *in the wide diffusion of the Gospel and the remarkable increase of religious knowledge.* God's Word is being carried into every land, and the children in our daily and Sabbath schools have a fuller acquaintance with Scripture than many men and women of the last generation. There is to be a yet more complete fulfilment of these promises in that glorious era of which we speak as the Millennium (ε.)

It rests with ourselves to determine whether the fulfilment of these promises shall be to us a blessing (ζ.)—

John Packer: Warnings and Consolations, pp. 256–271.

(α.) We can conceive of nothing more bright, pervading, and universal than the light of the sun. At its rising the whole face of nature is displayed, every object is brought out to view; the grandest or loveliest features of the scene are presented to us in all their extent and magnificence, while the most delicate tints of the smallest flower are seen in all their softest shades and richest hues. Still this glorious object in its full splendour, the sun itself is too dim, too dull, too feeble to represent the grace and love of our God; it must be multiplied sevenfold. And even then it but indistinctly shadows forth the unspeakable mercy of the everlasting God.—*Packer.*

(β.) "*Rivers and streams of waters.*" But where is their current? Upon every high mountain and upon every high hill. Now, there can be no rivers and streams on the summit of the mountain range, nor upon the high hill-top. Rivers and streams are fed from these lofty elevations; they take their rise amid these towering heights, but they do not find a channel there. Thus you see that to typify the effluence of the Holy Spirit, these flowing waters of the text are described as being in unusual localities, to intimate that the blessings will be in such abundance and profusion as to outrun expectation and surpass all experience. And this not in some highly favoured regions only, but the blessing shall be universal, even upon *every* high mountain and upon *every* high hill.—*Packer.*

(γ.) This, like the air, cannot be excluded; it penetrates the gloomiest caverns, can enter even through a cranny. So there is no soul out of reach of the all-pervading Spirit. Those that are inaccessible to man can be reached, and enriched, and blessed by the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost.—*Packer.*

(δ.) When we attempt to compare the boasted light of natural reason with the light which the Spirit alone can impart, it is not simply that the former is as the light of the moon, and the latter as the light of the sun; but the one is as Egyptian darkness, and the other as the splendour of the meridian sun, without even one small fleecy cloud intervening. Jesus Christ is the light of life (2 Cor. iv. 6). All that we can know of God, of His attributes and perfections, of His plans and purposes, He has revealed unto us by His Son. To those who are in Christ all is light, and harmony, and peace; to those who are without Christ all is gloom, and confusion, and terror. By faith in Him we see that all God's dealings wear an aspect of mercy, love, and wisdom. Corrections are inflicted for our profit; disappoint-

ments are sent to wean us from the unsatisfying, perishing things of time and sense. Surely, in this respect, the promise in the text is made good to the believer; he enjoys sevenfold light in his soul compared to that which he had in the days when he knew not the true God and Jesus Christ, whom He had sent.—*Packer.*

(*c.*) But these mercies will be preceded by the convulsions of the moral earthquake. The very terms in which the promise is couched convey the idea of trial and suffering. There is a breach which the Lord binds up, and there is the stroke of a wound to be healed, implying previous violence.—*Packer.*

(*f.*) What shall the universality and copiousness of the "rivers and streams of water" profit us, if we will not drink of them? In the natural world a man would be nothing benefited, though the light of the sun was augmented sevenfold, if he studiously closed and sealed every opening by which it entered his dwelling, or if he placed an impervious bandage tightly over his eyes whenever he went abroad (John xii. 36).—*Packer.*

[See also Outlines, RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY PLACE, xxxii. 2, and ENRICHING RIVERS, xxxiii. 21.]

THE EARTHLY SONG AND THE HEAVENLY VOICE.

xxx. 29–33. *Ye shall have a song . . . and the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, &c.*

The fulfilment of this prophecy is recorded in Isa. xxxvii. 36. The Assyrian power, hitherto unopposed in its march of conquest, sustained a severe check when it assailed Jerusalem. The great deliverance is here foretold. Inside the walls there would be song and gladness; outside, swift destruction. "The holy solemnity" was probably the Passover which Hezekiah and his people observed; and the "song" in that case would be the Paschal Hymn, comprising Ps. cxiii.–cxviii. There is a tradition that Sennacherib's army was destroyed on the night of the passover; and thus while the people were recalling their great national deliverance, a further and somewhat similar divine interposition was about to be made in their behalf. Mark how grandly, as if in response to the songs and gladness of the passover night, the voice of Jehovah comes in. It is impossible not to see the connection between the two voices. Songs of praise and gladness have still an echo in heaven, and call forth a divine response to quell the church's foes. Look, then, at the two voices, the human and the divine, in relation to each other.

1. *A voice of confidence on man's part responded to by a voice of power on God's part.* It showed no small faith in Hezekiah and his people to observe the passover in the circumstances. How could the little kingdom of Judah oppose the mighty conqueror? How could Jerusalem stand out against the assailants encamped in such numbers around its walls? God was their defence. To Him in this emergency they raised their songs of confidence. Nothing could more appropriately express their faith than the passover hymn. That night reminded them of the rescue from Egypt, and would inspire them with confidence in God. They were on the eve of another great deliverance, and their song was well fitted to prepare them for it, containing such passages as these, Ps. cxv. 1–11, cxviii. 6–13. Nor was their confidence disappointed. Without any human help, God overthrew their besiegers, but it was the song of faith that called forth the powerful voice of God. When faith appeals to God, the appeal is heard on high (Exod. xiv. 13; Ps. xlvi. 10). Two prisoners once prayed and sang praises to God at midnight. Their testimony for Christ had been silenced, but from the dark dungeon the song of confidence rose to heaven. "And the Lord caused His glorious voice to be heard," an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, and God gave His two witnesses an opportunity of bringing the Gospel to bear upon hardened hearts. Do you wish to see the arm of the Lord revealed? then sing your song of faith. Does the Church in these days sit powerless, sad, and despairing through the gloomy night of unbelief and prevailing ungodliness? Let her know that

man's extremity is God's opportunity. In the darkest night of seeming failure she has her God-given song, and if only she can sing it in spite of all that is black and threatening in her prospects, "the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm" in rebuking scepticism and indifference, in softening hard hearts, and in making friends of foes.

2. *A song of gladness and joy in God responded to by a voice of complacent affection.* All the Jewish feasts were occasions of gladness, and the passover must have been so, when we consider the event it commemorated, the communion with God to which it invited, and the future salvation it foreshadowed. The paschal hymn resounds with notes of gladness, *e.g.*, Ps. cxviii. 14, 15, 24. If our song of joy in God is hearty and sincere, we may expect a corresponding response. If we rejoice in God, He will rejoice over us (Zeph. iii. 17; Isa xxxi. 4, 5.)

3. *A song of self-dedication answered by a voice of recognition.* The song breathes the spirit of consecration to God's service (Ps. cxvi. 12–19). Do we thus consciously and spontaneously lay ourselves on the altar as living sacrifices? If we own God, God will own us. The destruction of Sennacherib's hosts was a proof to all the world that God owned Israel as His peculiar people. You, too, will have the token of divine ownership. For your sake God will rebuke the devourer. In response to your song of dedication, "the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard," giving success to your efforts and enterprises, blessing you and making you a blessing.

4. *A song of security calling forth a voice of preservation.* Within the walls the people marched in procession "to the mountain of the Lord, to the rock of Israel." That rock of ages was their defence. They felt secure in God's faithful keeping (Ps. cxv. 17, 18, cxviii. 16–18). Have you entered into this element of the paschal song? You shall hear God's protecting voice, and see the acts of His preserving care. However strong the foes that muster against you, they shall not prevail, for all the divine resources are engaged for your support (Col. iii. 3).

5. *A song of thanksgiving for past mercies answered by a voice that commanded new mercies.* This element was very prominent in the Passover observances, and it enters largely into the Lord's Supper, called on this account the Eucharist. How can we remember Christ without thankfulness and praise? When He took the bread and the cup He "gave thanks," and He and His disciples sang the paschal hymn. What strains of high thanksgiving it contains! It begins with praise (Ps. cxiii. 1, 2). It recalls the Exodus (Ps. cxiv.) It rises to a grateful recognition of God's goodness (Ps. cxvi. 7, 8, 17). When such a song rises from human lips, God will give fresh occasions for thankfulness.

Let the subject teach us the importance of sacred song. Prayer and preaching are divinely appointed means of grace and instruction, but we cannot dispense with song. God fights for His people, but it is with the accompaniment of tabrets and harps (ver. 32).—*William Guthrie, M.A.*

TOPHET ORDAINED OF OLD.

XXX. 33. *For Tophet is ordained of old, &c.*

Some of us have often admired the expression, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men;" implying that the law of persuasion should be the law of the Christian pulpit. Some would *alarm* men, some would bitterly *rail*, and others *thunder* at them; as though the human heart could never be prevailed upon to capitulate, but must always be taken by storm. Paul shows us the more excellent way. When he proclaims

"the terrors of the Lord," it is "to persuade men;" to persuade them to escape the ruin and to accept the remedy. Observe, he does not hide them, for the truth must be told, sin must be condemned, the wicked must be warned.

I. **Let us examine the local allusion and literal meaning of this verse.** "This allusion to Tophet is the earliest which appears in the Scriptures. Additional particulars appear in the history of Josiah's reformation (2 Kings xxiii. 10; Jer. vii. 31). The prophet Isaiah here represents Tophet as a place prepared for the burning of the Assyrian king. Made deep and large, with fire and wood in abundance, prepared for the king, and he being thrown into it, the breath of the Lord kindles it into fearful conflagration. This is, of course, a figurative description, Tophet being made the central point in the figure because it was a well-known place, a valley just outside the city, the valley of Hinnom, used for burning all the offal and filth of the city of Jerusalem." Isaiah was commissioned to utter this prophecy of the overthrow and consuming of the Assyrian army, in order to inspirit Hezekiah and the people against the threatened invasion. "Tophet is ordained of old" as that fiery place which would consume the dead bodies of these unjust invaders. Hence the Chaldee paraphrase says, "It was called the valley of the carcases and of the ashes or of the dead bodies for this reason, because the dead bodies of the camp of the Assyrians fell there;" to which Josephus gives testimony when he relates that the place was called the Assyrian camp. What force these recollections would give to our Lord's threatenings of hell to the Jews who saw the smoke of this valley always rising before their eyes (compare Isa. lxvi. 24 with Mark ix. 43–48).

II. **Note some of those solemn and awakening truths suggested by this verse.** 1. *The same record which provides for the security of the Church, provides for the final overthrow of its enemies.* This was the time of Jacob's extremity; he was saved, and his enemies consumed. 2. *In the enjoyment of our highest privileges, we are surrounded by the most solemn terrors.* Tophet lay not only *near*, but at the very foot of Mount Zion. From the heights of Zion might be seen the smoke, the fire, and the worm in the valley of Tophet! A dreadful thought this! Hell is set full in our view when worshipping in Zion (1 Pet. iv. 17, 18). Bunyan says, "So I saw a man may go by profession to heaven's gate and yet be cast away." Our Lord (Luke xiii. 25). 3. *While no combination of power can shield the wicked, the believer has always a source of safety and a song of joy.—Samuel Thodey.*

The Only Counsellor.

xxxi. 1–3. *Woe to the rebellious children, &c.*

These words were spoken by the prophet at a time when the Jewish nation was in great and imminent danger. They were addrest to the rulers of the nation, who were endeavouring to ward off the danger: and their purpose is to rebuke those rulers for the measures they were taking with that view, by entering into alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in the hope that he would deliver them out of it. But we should make a great mistake if we imagine that there is nothing in them that concerns our duty as individuals. God's reproofs of nations are such as we may all take home to our hearts, ponder, and learn from; for they contain principles of righteousness which, like the sun which shines at once upon half the world and ourselves, are intended for the guidance both of nations and of individuals. Of this truth a striking example is afforded by our text. Its object is to rebuke the Jewish rulers for the line of policy which

they were taking with the view of defending their country from her enemies. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was marching against Judah, with the intent of conquering it, and reducing the people to slavery, as Israel had already been conquered and enslaved a few years before by Shalmaneser. The danger was very great. What was King Hezekiah to do? How was Judah to stand against Assyria? If you were to ask any of the politicians who are wise in the wisdom of this world, they would all say, there could be no question about the matter; that the only way of saving Judah was to obtain the alliance and aid of some powerful nation, whose succour might render her more nearly a match for the armies of the invader. This is exactly what the rulers of Judah set about doing. They entered into an alliance with the king of Egypt, with the view of gaining assistance from him, which might enable them to cope with Sennacherib in the field. This is just what a statesman, who plumed himself on his wisdom in these days, would do. Yet it is for doing this very thing that the prophet Isaiah in the text reproves and denounces woe against them. Their conduct, therefore, must have been sinful. Let us try to discover in what their sin lay.

1. They were making use of human means *alone*, to ward off the danger which threatened. It is not sinful to use such means; the sin lies in fancying they can help us without the blessing of God, and in not seeking *that*. This was what Isaiah denounced, and what we do. When any danger threatens us, we forthwith take counsel—of ourselves, or of our friends, forgetting that all our counsel in the first instance ought to be taken of God, by searching His law with the purpose of discerning what He wills us to do, and by praying Him to enlighten our understandings, that we may be enabled to discern His will. So too we are ever seeking to cover ourselves with a covering, to find some protection or other whereby we may be preserved from danger: only the covering we should cover ourselves with is the covering of the Spirit of God. We should make Him our shield and buckler; and then we need not fear what man can do unto us.

Our unwillingness to take counsel of God can only proceed from an evil heart of unbelief (α), and it is as unwise as it is undutiful. None but God's counsel is infallible, and only His covering is sure. But we choose to have a covering of our own making, and send up mists and clouds to hide the covering of God's Spirit from us, thus "adding sin to sin."

2. Observe, the princes of Judah were not merely taking counsel of man, instead of God, and covering with a covering which was not of the Spirit of God: but the arm they were trusting to was the arm of Egypt. Now Egypt had from the first been the deadly enemy of the Israelites, and of their God. Egypt was the source from which all manner of idolatrous abominations flowed in upon them: out of Egypt they had been called; and they were no longer. Therefore the prophet goes on to forbid their seeking help from Egypt, and to predict that the help of Egypt would end in their confusion. If we are guilty of their sin, we shall not escape their woe. When trials come upon men to-day, they are apt to listen to Satan's assurance that in that particular emergency he can help them better than God can. They listen; they sin, and the one sin leads to other sins; and ere long they are ruined (H. E. I., 173–175).

Still it is wo to those who take counsel of anything earthly! In times of difficulty it is of God alone that we must seek and take counsel. He alone can give us such counsel as will never fail us even in this life: and the wisdom of His counsel, which we now see only through a glass darkly, will become brighter than the sun at noon, when the veil of this world is drawn away from before it.—

Julius Charles Hare, M.A.: *Sermons Preacht in Herstmonceaux Church*, pp. 305–323.

(a.) From that unbelief which loses sight of and forgets the Ruler and Lawgiver of the world, and which is prone to worship whatever dazzles the senses and flatters our carnal nature. What should we say if a child, in a time of doubt or danger, would not run to ask its parents what to do, but were to run away from its parents and ask a stranger, or were to ask its own ignorance, or its own whims, or the ignorance of its playfellows—yea, were to ask its toys? Surely such conduct would bespeak a loveless, undutiful heart, and a silliness such as could only be excused during the faint early dawn of the mind. So is it a proof of a loveless, undutiful heart not to seek counsel of God; nor is such conduct less unwise than undutiful. For what do we want in a counsellor except wisdom and foresight—wisdom to know the principles and laws of things, and foresight to discern their consequences? Now, neither of these faculties can we find in any earthly counsellor, except in a very low degree. For, not to speak of the numberless accidents which warp and bias our own judgments and those of our fellow-men, and lead them awry, even at best man's understanding, unless so far as it is enlightened from above by a knowledge of heavenly laws, can only reckon up what is wont to be, without any insight into what must be; and his eyes are ever so hoodwinkt by the present that he cannot even look forward into to-morrow. Whereas everything that God ordains must be right and true, and must stand fast for ever, even after heaven and earth have past away. He knows what we ought to do, *and He will bear us through in doing it.* Yet we choose rather to be led by the blind than by the Seeing. . . . Herein the very heathens condemn us. For they, though they know not the true God, yet believed there were powers in the heavens far wiser and longer-sighted than man; and so believing, they acted accordingly. Rightfully distrusting themselves, they sought to ascertain the will and purpose of those powers by searching it out according to the means whereby they imagined it would be revealed.—*J. C. Hare.*

The Spirituality of the Divine Nature.

xxxi. 3. "*The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.*"

Among the sins to which the ancient Israelites were addicted, one of the most prevailing was a disposition, in seasons of invasion or calamity, to place confidence in the power of surrounding nations, and to seek the assistance of their sovereigns, instead of trusting in the living God. Egypt, being the largest monarchy in their immediate neighbourhood, was frequently their refuge in times of distress and difficulty. Remonstrance (vers. 1, 2).

In the text an important and infinite disparity between God and man, which rendered the Egyptian monarch infinitely inferior to Him in the qualities which entitle to confidence and trust. The spirituality of the Supreme Being is the contrast.

I. *The spirituality of the Deity is intimately connected with the possession of that infinite, unlimited power which renders Him the proper object of entire confidence.*

There is a prejudice in favour of matter and against spirit, as if the former were possessed of greater force than the latter. It arises from our mistaking secondary and remote effects for causes, instead of ascending to God the supreme cause. Thus we think of the elements of nature and of mechanical forces. We have no power of operating on the objects immediately around us, but by means of our bodies. But it is mind alone which is the seat of power. The power by which all changes are effected through the instrumentality of the body resides immediately in the mind. It is that mysterious principle called Will. Whatever motions the mind wills instantly take place. This is an illustration of the control which the Deity exercises over the universe. The Divine Being has only to will the most important changes and they are instantly accomplished. It is impossible to give any account of innumerable changes continually taking place in the visible world, without tracing them up to mind.

II. *The spirituality of God stands in close and intimate connection with His Invisibility.*

1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. Were He the object of sight, He must be limited. He cannot, therefore, be figured out by any art or skill of man (Acts xvii. 24–29; Deut. iv. 15; Ex. xx. 4, 5). Hence the great impiety of those who have attempted to paint and figure out the persons of the Trinity. The necessary effect of any attempt to represent the Deity to the human senses, by pictures or images, must be to degrade, to an incalculable degree, our conceptions of Him. Hence images of angels, the Virgin Mary, and saints of inferior character.

III. *The spirituality of God is inseparably connected with His Immensity and Omnipresence* (Jer. xxiii. 23, 24; Ps. cxxxix. 7–12).

1. It is necessary that matter should have some figure. But figure is circumscribed within a certain outline. To conceive of the Divine Being as material would involve absurdity. 2. If matter were unlimited there would be no possibility of motion. 3. If the Divine Being were material, He would render impossible the co-existence of created beings. Two portions of matter cannot occupy the same space. But the infinite Spirit is present with every part of His creation.

IV. *The spirituality of God enables His infinite Wisdom.*

This seems a necessary property of that Being who is present to all His creatures at all times. His infinite acquaintance with His creatures is a necessary consequence of His presence. Every one is as much within His survey at one moment as at another. We judge of men's character by their actions, He by their motives. And His judgment is always according to truth.

V. *The spirituality of God establishes an intimate relation between Him and all His intelligent creatures.*

Their dependence on Him is absolute; their subjection to Him constant and incessant; but in a special manner is He the Father of spirits. The body has a tendency to separate us from God, by the dissimilarity of its nature; the soul unites us to Him by those principles and faculties which are congenial to His own. To estrange ourselves from God is to be guilty of a most enormous kind of offence: it is forgetting our proper parent, the author of our existence. To love Him, to seek union with Him, is to return to our proper original.

VI. *The spirituality of God renders Him capable of being the satisfying Portion, the Supreme Good, of all intelligent beings.*

He is the source and spring of all happiness (Lam. iii. 24, 25; Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26). 1. That which constitutes the felicity of the mind must be something out of it. Whoever retires into his own mind for happiness will be miserable. God is qualified to be the everlasting and inexhaustible spring of happiness. 2. He who can always confer happiness on another being must be superior to that being. To be the source of happiness is the prerogative of God. 3. That in which the happiness of a rational and mental creature consists, must be congenial to the nature of that creature. 4. That which forms the principle of our felicity must be something that is capable of communicating itself to us. God, as He is a Spirit, is capable of communicating Himself to the spirits of His rational creatures. These communications will constitute the felicity of heaven. Even while they continue on earth, it is the privilege of the faithful to enjoy union with the Father of spirits through His Son.

IMPROVEMENT. 1. Let us raise ourselves, in contemplating the Divine Being, above what is sensible, visible, and corporeal. 2. Since God is a Spirit, there must be an everlasting connection established between Him and us, on which will depend our destiny for ever. Hence Jesus Christ has come. What movements are in your minds towards this great object?—*Robert Hall: Works*, vol. vi., pages 1–32.

A CALL TO THE REVOLTED.

xxxi. 6. *Turn ye unto Him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.*

Had mankind adhered to the divine idea, no such word as this would have been necessary. Divine communications would have consisted probably of counsels, directions, predictions, progressive revelations of truth. The demand that man turn shows that he has gone astray. All divine communications suppose the existence of sin and the need of salvation. Happily for us, they show the way in which salvation may be obtained. The parts of the human race are as the whole. The people God distinguished by separating them from the nations, with special connection to Himself, followed the universal tendency to wander from Him. They forsook His law. When trouble came, they sought help anywhere. At the time of this prophecy they were looking to Egypt instead of to the Lord. The prophet remonstrates, and invites them to make a friend of God against Assyria. The text may be addressed to sinners now. Here is—

I. A SERIOUS ACCUSATION.

God was the King of Israel. Departure from His laws was a national revolt. Man's revolt from God consists in—1. **Disaffection.** When love to the sovereign departs, the way is prepared for any act of hostility circumstances may favour. The disaffection of man to God is inbred. From the original fall man derives a mysterious tendency to depart from God (H.E.I., 3390–3397). Human nature dislikes the divine holiness; dislike of the divine holiness is the root from which grow men's evil deeds. So deep is the revolt that man has no desire to return. **2. Disobedience.** You may say it is natural to sin, and we cannot be held responsible for it. Do you judge of, and deal with your fellow-men in that way as to their conduct to you? If they injure, defraud you, do you say they have a natural inclination to fraud and wrongdoing, and therefore are not responsible? When a son who has been carefully trained develops tendencies and inclinations to evil, attaches himself to bad companions, &c., do you exonerate him from blame because it is his nature? You say he ought to have resisted the evil inclinations and cultivated such as were good. You are right. But why should there be a difference when the object of the wrongdoing is God? The dislike of God's holiness inherent in human nature develops itself in the indulgence of sinful passions and disobedience to God's commands. Does the fact that it was your nature free you from responsibility? Are you not possessed of reason and conscience? Do not these constitute responsibility? Is not the fact that you decline the help God offers for the subjugation of evil sufficient to throw on you the entire blame of your continued revolt? 3. **Distrust.** A large part of the revolt of ancient Israel from God consisted in distrust. When man withdraws his love from God and abandons himself to disobedience, he is sure to lose faith. You will soon cease to trust the friend whom you persistently wrong and disregard. Is not this the explanation of much of the unbelief among men? They are unhappy in their severance from God, yet unwilling to return. Then they expunge from their beliefs His declarations concerning sin and its punishment. Truth after truth disappears. Then Himself disappears. They persuade themselves that there is no need of Him, then that He does not exist. The wish is father to the thought. Because the heart and life have revolted from Him, the intellect labours to sweep Him out of the world which He has made.

II. AN EARNEST CALL.

"Turn ye unto Him." From the folly of the intellect; from the perversity of the heart; from the disobedience of the life in which your revolt has manifested itself. God is. He is a living person, with all the feel-

ings of one, as well as a supreme ruler clothed with governmental authority. He is worth turning to. 2. In the gospel, He invites you to repent, to turn. It is a complete change of your heart and life. You can examine and reflect upon the truth. You can consider the righteousness of His claim. You can consider the motive that is furnished by His offer of a free pardon and a full salvation procured for you by the death of His Son. 3. Do you feel yourself weak? He will help you to turn. 4. Turn from the wrong path to the right one. (1.) Turn to the trust which He encourages. Bring your sin and need to Jesus. (2.) Turn to the obedience He demands. There must be a complete surrender. All sin must be relinquished, even the dearest. Choose the way of holiness. (3.) Turn to the love He deserves. It comes indeed into the heart with submission and faith. 5. Think of the danger of continued revolt; of the wrongfulness of revolt; of the blessedness of return.—*J. Rawlinson.*

The Fiery Ordeal of the Church.

xxxi. 9. *The Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.*

There is a variety of purposes for which fire is used. One of them was of old for the sacrifice, the burnt-offering; another was for incense, to keep it always smoking. Furnaces were used by the workers in metals.

I. The fire. "Whose *fire* is in Zion." Without the sacred fire there would have been no burnt-offering, no clouds of incense; and therefore God commanded that it should be kept ever burning. In this sense, the fire is the emblem of life divine, the Holy Spirit's work. May it be for ever burning! Where it burns strongly, what clouds of incense of praise and prayer ascend to heaven!

II. The furnace. "Whose *furnace* is in Jerusalem." It is there for the purpose of accomplishing God's designs with regard to His people. A furnace is nothing without fuel, and the fuel may be of various kinds. God heats His furnace with different kinds of fuel—sometimes with bodily afflictions, sometimes with losses of various kinds, sometimes with bereavements, sometimes with persecutions, sometimes with all these combined. Oh, the vast importance of viewing every trial of a temporal kind as sent on purpose to constitute a little fuel for God's furnace! God is doing three things with His furnace. He is melting, He is manifesting, He is making useful. 1. He is *melting*. We are so hard and stubborn, so full of dross, that nothing less than the fire will serve (Isa. i. 25). 2. He is *manifesting*. The fire tests both us (α) and our work (1 Cor. iii. 13). In this way God manifests the difference between His people and the false professor, and shows who are His own (Zech. xiii. 9). 3. He is *making useful*. Take a lesson from the very vessels you use at table every day; they would have been of no use at all, had they not passed through the fire.

Conclusion. The trials of God's people tend (1) to exercise and develop their spiritual excellence; (2.) To demonstrate the Divine love and faithfulness; (3.) To prepare them for the enjoyment of Himself at last (β). —*Joseph Irons: Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii. 109–120.

(α.) Upon one occasion, like the prophet Jeremiah, I visited the potter's house. I admired his ingenuity and the beauty of his work on the wheels. But after a little while, I found there was really no reliance to be put on the results of his labour and ingenuity. When put into the furnace, some of the vessels were marred and rendered good for nothing; they cracked and went to pieces. Did not the potter shape them aright? Did he not make them of the same clay? Did he not take the same pains with them? Then what was the defect? They would not stand fire.—*Irons.*

(β.) H. E. I., 116–142.

The Preciousness of Christ.

xxxii. 2. *"A man shall be as an hiding-place," &c.*

These figures all coincide in setting forth one great and blessed truth—the truth that *in Christ there is suitable and complete relief under every circumstance of distress:* in distress arising—1. from *temporal sufferings;* 2. from *conviction of sin;* 3. from *strong temptation;* 4. from the *near approach of death.*—*John Watt, B.D.: Sermons*, pp. 92–108.

Jesus Christ—I. The refuge from all dangers; II. The fruition of all desires; III. The rest and refreshment in all trials.—*A. Maclaren, B.A.: Sermons, Third Series*, p. 135.

This prediction, uttered in the days of Ahaz, had a primary reference to Hezekiah, and to the relief from wicked magistrates which would be experienced in his reign. But its ultimate reference was to the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are three separate figures, very striking to an Eastern ear, which admit of distinct illustration:—I. **"A hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest."** (α.) This is but one figure, for the latter clause, as is common in Eastern poetry, is only the echo of the former. Jesus is found to be the best hiding-place and covert:—1. From the winds and tempests of *affliction.* 2. From the tempest of *an agitated conscience.* 3. He is the only hiding-place from the tempest of *divine wrath.* II. **"As rivers of water in a dry place,"**—that is, Jesus conveys satisfaction and refreshment to those who can find them nowhere else. He alone satisfies the heart's thirst—1. for *happiness;* 2. for *consolation;* 3. for *reconciliation with God.* III. **"As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."** (β.) Such a retreat does our Redeemer afford to those who are fainting under the labours and discouragements of this wearisome life (Isa. 1–4, Jer. xxxi. 25). 1. Let us thank God for such a Saviour—the very Saviour we need. 2. Let us abide in Him—we always need Him.

—*E. Griffin, D.D.: Fifty-nine Plain Practical Sermons*, pp. 261–270.

I. *There underlies this prophecy a very sad, a very true conception of human life.* The three promises imply three diverse aspects of man's need and misery. The "covert" and the "hiding-place" imply tempest and storm and danger; the "rivers of water" imply drought and thirst; "the shadow of a great rock" implies lassitude and languor, fatigue and weariness. Sad this is, but how true! Do we not need a "covert" from the tempests of adverse circumstances, of temptations, of God's anger kindled by our sins!

II. *There shines through these words a mysterious hope*—the hope that one of ourselves shall deliver us from all this evil in life. "A *man*," &c. Such an expectation seems to be right in the teeth of all experience, and far too high pitched even to be fulfilled. It appears to demand in him who should bring it to pass powers which are more than human, and which must in some inexplicable way be wide as the range of humanity and enduring as the succession of the ages. All experience seems to teach that no human arm or heart can be to another soul what these words promise, and what we need.

III. *This mysterious hope is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.* That which seemed impossible is real. The forebodings of experience have not fathomed the powers of Divine Love. There is a man, our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, who can be to all human souls the adequate object of their perfect trust, the abiding home of their deepest love, the unfailing supply for their profoundest wants. Behind His protection they are safe, by His grace they are satisfied, beneath His shelter they have rest.—*A. Maclaren, B.A.: Sermons, Third Series*, pp. 136–147.

I. We have here AN INSTRUMENT OF CONSOLATION (γ). 1. It was an

instrument of consolation to those who first heard it. The prophecy in which it occurs was given in the time of Ahaz, when justice was perverted, and the government, which should have been for the protection of the people, was organised for their oppression. Terrible are the sufferings of men at such a time, and precious was the hope which this prophecy held out of "a man"—a ruler—who should be a defence and blessing to the poor of the nation. 2. It was an instrument of consolation to devout men in all the centuries which intervened between its utterance and the coming of Christ. In due time Hezekiah ascended the throne, and in him this prophecy had a partial fulfilment. But he passed away, and Israel needed such "a man" as much as ever. Devout men learned to look for him in the Messiah for whom they and their fathers had waited. In the midst of national and personal humiliation and sufferings, they were sustained and cheered by the hope of His advent. 3. In due time He appeared. Whether in Him this prophecy was completely or only partially fulfilled, let any reader of the Gospels testify. And since the days when Christ went about Judæa, solacing human woes, and ministering to human necessities, this declaration has been still more full of consolation to generation after generation down to our own day. It has taught men to whom to flee in their distresses, and fleeing to Him they have found that it was with no vain hope that it had cheered them. When you think what it has been to men ever since it was uttered, can you help looking upon it with love?

II. OF THIS INSTRUMENT OF CONSOLATION ALL MEN HAVE NEED. There are some portions of Scripture which have only a limited interest, because they are for special classes (*e.g.*, kings, subjects, parents, children, &c.;) but this is a portion for every one. The needs of which it speaks will be felt by all men; and all men, at some time or other, will long for the blessings which it promises. Hence —1. It should be stored up in the memory of the young. (*b.*) 2. The aged should count it one of their chief treasures. (*c.*)

III. TO THE PRESENT AND PERMANENT VALUE OF THIS INSTRUMENT OF CONSOLATION THERE ARE MILLIONS OF LIVING WITNESSES. The declarations of our text are very beautiful, but the important question is, Are they *true? Is Christ to His people all that He is here said to be?* 1. Our text says that Christ is a refuge for His people. "As a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." Remember what kind of storms sometimes sweep across the Eastern deserts. [See outline: The Christian's Refuge, section I.] As you have pursued the pilgrimage of human life, have any such storms burst upon you?—the storm of adversity? of persecution? of an awakened conscience? of temptations? The worst storms are those which rage *within* a man! In such storms where did you find shelter? what did you find Christ to be to *you?* 2. Our text says that Christ will satisfy the thirst of His people. Picture the scene at Rephidim. To the multitudes who had almost died of thirst, how welcome were the streams that burst from the smitten rock! All men thirst for *happiness;* the distressed for *consolation,* the penitent for *reconciliation with God.* In these respects, has Christ been to *you* "as rivers of water in a dry place?" 3. Our text says that Christ will give rest to His people. (*d.*)

IV. Every truth is a call to duty. TO WHAT DUTIES DOES OUR TEXT CALL US? If we have had a personal experience of the truth of its declarations, it says—1. PRAISE GOD. Would not a storm-driven traveller give thanks for "a covert," the thirst-consumed for "rivers of water," the faint and weary for "the shadow of a great rock?" Let us remember what Christ has been to us, and give "thanks unto God for His unspeakable gift!" 2. TAKE COURAGE. Usually as years increase troubles multiply: but what Christ has been to you in the past, He will be in the future — an all-sufficient

Saviour! 3. To those who have not yet had a personal experience of the truth of its declarations, my text says, COME TO JESUS. Its promises are invitations. Is not a well of water in itself an invitation to a thirsty man? You need all that the text promises; and in the experience of millions of men living *now*, you have abundant evidence that its promises are worthy of your trust. Familiarise yourself with the "hiding-place" *before* the tempests of life burst upon you, that in the day of storm you may know whither to flee. Blessed are they who have made the Man of whom our text speaks their friend. According to His word (Matt. xxviii.), He is with them "always," "as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

(α.) We arose with the sun, and went out to saddle our dromedaries, when we found to our great surprise that their heads were buried in the sand; and it was not possible for us to draw them out. We called the Bedouins of the tribe to our aid, who informed us that the instinct of the camels led them to conceal their heads thus, in order to escape the simoom; that their doing so was an infallible presage of that terrible tempest of the desert, which would not be long in breaking loose; and that we could not proceed on the journey without meeting a certain death. The camels, who perceive the approach of this fearful storm two or three hours before it bursts, turn themselves to the side opposed to the wind, and dig into the sand. It is impossible to make them stir from that position either to eat or drink during the whole tempest, were it to last for several days. Providence has endowed them with this instinct of preservation, which never deceives them. When we learned with what we were threatened, we partook the general consternation, and hastened to take all the precautions which they pointed out to us. It is not sufficient to put the horses under shelter; it is requisite also to cover their heads and stop up their ears, otherwise they will be suffocated by the whirlwinds of fine impalpable sand, which the storm sweeps furiously before it. The men collect under their tents, block up the crevices with the greatest care, and provide a supply of water, which they keep within reach; they then lie down on the ground, their heads covered with the mashlas, and thus remain all the time that the tornado continues.

The camp was thrown into the greatest bustle, each bent on providing safety for his cattle, and afterwards withdrawing precipitately under his tent. We had scarcely got our beautiful Negde mares under cover ere the tempest burst. Impetuous blasts of wind hurled clouds of red and burning sand in eddies, and overthrew all upon whom their fury fell; or, heaping up hills, they buried all that had strength to resist being carried away. If, at this period, any part of the body be exposed, the flesh is scorched as if a hot iron had touched it. The water, which was intended to cool us, began to boil, and the temperature of the tent exceeded that of a Turkish bath. The hurricane blew in all its fury for six hours, and gradually subsided during six more; an hour longer, and I believe we had all been stifled. When we ventured to leave the tents, a frightful spectacle presented itself; five children, two women, and a man were lying dead on the still burning sand, and several Bedouins had their faces blackened and entirely calcined, as if by a blast from a fiery furnace. When the wind of the simoom strikes an unfortunate wretch on the head, the blood gushes in streams from his mouth and nostrils, his face swells, becomes black, and he shortly dies of suffocation.—*Lamartine: Travels in the East*, p. 213.

"A hiding-place from *the wind*, a covert from *the tempest*." Soon Red Sea and all were lost in a sand-storm, which lasted the whole day. Imagine all distant objects entirely lost to view,—the sheets of sand fleeting along the surface of the desert like streams of water; the whole air filled, though invisibly, with a tempest of sand, driving in your face like sleet. Imagine the caravan toiling against this—the Bedouins each with his shawl thrown completely over his head, half of the riders sitting backwards,—the camels, meantime, thus virtually left without guidance, though, from time to time, throwing their long necks sideways to avoid the blast, yet moving straight onwards with a painful sense of duty truly edifying to behold. . . . . Through the tempest, this roaring and driving tempest, which sometimes made me think that this must be the real meaning of 'a *howling* wilderness,' we rode on the whole day.—*Dean Stanley: Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 68, 69.

(β.) I was reading, a day or two ago, one of our last books of travels in the wilderness of the Exodus, in which the writer told how, after toiling for hours under a scorching sun, over the hot white marly flat, seeing nothing but a beetle or two on the way, and finding no shelter anywhere from the pitiless beating of the sunshine, the three travellers came at last to a little Retem bush only a few feet high, and flung themselves down and tried to hide at least their heads from those 'sunbeams like swords,' even beneath its ragged shade. And my text tells of a great rock, with blue dimness in its shadow, with haply a fern or or two in the moist places of its crevices, where there is rest and a man can lie down and be cool, while all outside is burning sun, and burn-'ng sand, and dancing mirage.—*A. Maclaren.*

(γ.) When I was at Nuremberg, among the scenes of interest, I visited the tower where are preserved some of the instruments of torture which were used both by the Inquisition and the Municipality in the Middle Ages. As one looked at them, the heart grew sick at the thought of the pain which by means of them had been inflicted upon countless victims; and *as* instruments by which human beings had been tortured, they were hateful. On the other hand, when one thinks what this verse has been to countless human souls, what consolation and courage it has ministered to those who were sick at heart in many generations, it is impossible not to look upon it with love.

(δ.) It is one of a large number of passages which I like to think of as *Scripture lamps*. Starting at mid-day from a railway terminus, you wonder to see that the lamps in the carriages are lighted; but very soon the train plunges into a tunnel, and you perceive that they were not lighted a moment too soon. So with these lamps of Scripture: get them hung up in your soul at the outset of your journey in life. Sooner than you think you will find yourself in some dark tunnel of trial. It will be too late *then* to think of furnishing yourself with them. Blessed are those then in whom they are brightly shining!

(ε.) It is not to be expected that the young will fully appreciate it. They have not had the experience necessary to enable them to do so. At the outset of a voyage, passengers are apt to think most about those things in a ship which are comparatively unimportant—the size of their berths, the elegant decorations of the cabin, &c.; but before it is ended, especially if the voyage is a stormy one, they come to think more about the staunchness of the vessel, the strength of the rigging, the seamanship of the captain, rather than of his fitness or unfitness for a drawing-room. So in dealing with the Bible: at the outset of life, we are apt to give our whole attention to things *comparatively* unimportant, such as the possibility of reconciling the first chapter of Genesis with the teaching of modern science, &c.; but, by and by, trouble teaches us to value the Scriptures as our only sure guide amidst life's moral perplexities, as our only true comforter amidst life's sorrows. It is trouble that teaches us that the promises are "precious promises;" and therefore I may fairly expect that the promise of our text will be prized by the aged.

(θ.) One day—one of the most beautiful and happy days I have ever known—I and some friends visited the Valley of Rocks, at Lynton, in North Devon. We had selected for our dining-place the shaded side of one of the largest of the rocks which have made that valley famous. Just as we were finishing our repast, an aged gentleman approached us, and asked to be permitted to share our resting-place. "I should not have intruded upon you," he said, "but I am very weary." Instantly my text recurred to my memory, and I saw somewhat of its power and beauty: "As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." In such a land, on such a day, how welcome is the sight of a great rock! How sweet and refreshing to rest in its cooling shade! Amid the toils and troubles of life we often need rest and refreshment. *Have you found them in Christ?* Are the declarations of our text true?

The Christian's Refuge.

(For Christmas Day.)

xxxii. 2. *A man shall be as an hiding place, &c.*

This is a very remarkable prophecy and promise, and at first sight most strikingly at variance with almost every other declaration of the Word of God, *e.g.*, Isa. ii. 22; Ps. cxlvi. 3; lxii. 8, 9; Jer. xvii. 5. "A *man* shall be as an hiding place from the wind!" A poor, weak, helpless mortal, unable to protect himself from the wind and tempest, shall *he* be our refuge? Shall God's own Word command us to leave the living Fountain, and betake ourselves in our necessities to the broken cisterns of earth? Strange inconsistency, astonishing contradiction to every other portion of God's word? But who is this Man? He of whom it is also written (Zech. xiii. 7; Phil. ii. 6); and who is thus spoken of by the Spirit of God Himself, when predicting the event of this day (Isa. ix. 6). It is the Lord Jesus Christ, then, who reveals Himself in the words before us under two striking similitudes; the first of which regards His people's safety, and the second their consolations.

I. As regards their safety: "hiding place from the wind, covert from the tempest." Picture to yourself one of those scenes which Eastern travellers paint, when they describe the passage of a caravan across some dreary desert, where, throughout the long day's journey, there is no house, no rock, no tree to afford a moment's shade or

shelter. The wind suddenly rises, the lightning glares, and in the distance are beheld gigantic columns of sand, raised and kept together in such vast masses by the whirlwind that drives them towards the poor bewildered travellers, who behold in them at once their destruction and their grave. In vain do they attempt to fly; as vain were all thoughts of resistance. Before the shortest prayer is finished, that multitude that was just now full of life and animation, is hushed in silence; every heart has ceased to beat; the simoom of the desert has passed over them, and the place they occupied is scarcely to be distinguished from the surrounding plain. This is no flight of the imagination, but a simple statement of a fact of not unfrequent occurrence. Now imagine in such a scene with what feelings these alarmed and flying travellers would greet "a hiding-place" and "a covert." If a rock of adamant, a barrier which neither sand, nor wind, nor tempest could beat down or overleap, should suddenly spring up between them and those swiftly advancing columns of death, what would be their feelings of joy, their thoughts of gratitude, their language of praise! Who can imagine the heartfelt cry of thanksgiving to God which would arise from that vast multitude at so complete, so merciful, so unhoped-for a deliverance! With such feelings should we "behold the Man" of whom I speak to-day. We stood in as great a danger. Our sins had raised a tempest of the wrath of God, against which the whole created host of heaven would in vain have attempted to erect a barrier. But our Lord has wrought a deliverance for us as much needed, as unexpected, as complete. He has interposed between us and the mighty "wind," the appalling "tempest," which justly threatened our destruction. 1. Let us who have found shelter in Christ rejoice in Him, and be glad this day because of the quietness we enjoy. Let those who are still outside the great "Hiding-Place," the wondrous "Covert" which God's mercy has provided, remember that an unapplied Saviour is no Saviour. Their peril has been in no sense lessened by His advent. In the gladness of this day they can have no share.

II. His people's consolation. "As rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Before we had symbols of *safety;* here we have symbols of *consolation.* 1. *God's people often feel that this world is "a dry and barren place, and thirst for consolation and succour."* That which they thirst for, they may find in Christ. He is not merely a river, but (so abundant are His consolations) "rivers of water" to them that are fainting under the trials, anxieties, or distresses of the world. But it is not enough that the river is running at your feet; you must know it is there, you must drink of its waters, or they will not assuage their thirst. In Hagar sitting down in utter hopelessness and helplessness, when near her there was an abundant supply of water for herself and her child (Gen. xxi. 15–19), we have an emblem of too many distressed and sorrowful Christians. "*Rivers* of water" are flowing past you: arise, and drink! (Rev. xxii. 17). 2. *God's people are often faint and weary as they pursue their earthly pilgrimage.* But during every stage of it they may "renew their strength," and so be enabled to persevere until at length "they stand in Zion before God," for Christ is "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Don't be satisfied with just coming *within the range of the shadow* of the Rock; there are in the Rock recesses where you may find a complete shelter and a sweeter rest. Enter into them. Cultivate a closer fellowship with Christ. So in every stage of your journey you shall have not only strength, but joy (Isaiah, xxxv. 10). —*H. Blunt, A.M.: Posthumous Sermons,* pp. 23–42.

The "Man" here referred to is the Divine Redeemer—the one theme of the Bible. "Hiding-place" and

"covert" express substantially the same idea—shelter, defence, safety, deliverance both from actual and impending evil. Jesus Christ in this broad and comprehensive sense is the Refuge of His people. Fleeing to Him, men find protection, &c.

I. **Christ is a refuge in the day of earthly disappointment.** Human life full of disappointments. Few of our anticipations of good realised. Our fondest and most sacredly cherished hopes blighted. The world deceives men: it is not what it seems to be, it does not satisfy the desires it awakens. The god of this world is the master spirit of lying and deception, and he so manages the shifting scenes as to keep up the deception until the last. So with (*a*) the man of business, (*b*) those who aspire to earthly honour, fame, power, (*c*) the student, (*d*) the pleasure-seeker. To these children of disappointment, Christ is a refuge; He has Himself felt the ills of life (Heb. iv. 15, 16). There is a "hiding-place" where the fury of life's storms never comes; the God of mercy offers eternal life in the Gospel. Forsaken, disheartened, disappointed men may still be accepted of Christ, and find peace and rest in Him.

II. **Christ is a Refuge in time of affliction.** This is a world of sorrow and suffering; men turn from it in disgust and anguish to seek relief elsewhere, or to weep life away in sadness and darkness. Now Christ alone is available in just such an hour. When the world turns its back upon us, there is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother—one born for adversity—a shield and a deliverer in the day of affliction. We may not be able to explain the philosophy of the thing, but the soul that looks to Christ is so sustained as to rejoice in tribulation, and the heaviest burden is lightened and made a blessing.

III. **Christ is a Refuge in the day of trial.** It pleases the Lord to make full proof of His people. He puts their love, fidelity, and integrity to the test. God tries (*a*) our faith, (*b*) hope, (*c*) patience, (*d*) principles. And in His day of fiery trial our only safety is in the "hiding-place" of Divine mercy—we need the "covert" of the Almighty wings. None but Christ is able to give the soul confidence in such days and hours.

IV. **Christ is a Refuge in the day of fear.** Sin is darkness, and hence wherever there is sin there is gloom and fear. The wicked man is a slave to fear, and even the Christian at times suffers greatly because of it. The remedy for this gloomy experience is in Christ; and there is a power in the Gospel to lift the soul into a region of perpetual sunshine. In Christian experience, peace, joy, and hope are the ministering angels (Hab. iii. 17, 18).

V. **Christ is a Refuge from the torments of an accusing conscience.** The day of self-convicted guilt always a day of memorable experiences. Conscience upbraids, justice demands satisfaction; the soul is ready to sink into hell. Whose arm can save in such an hour? where shall he seek refuge? In that hour none but Christ can save.

VI. **Christ is a Refuge in the day of final wrath.** The wrath to come—the just, final, and eternal wrath of God—a reality, a fixed fact in thought and experience. Jesus Christ is a refuge from this impending evil. The Cross lifted up on Calvary has received the thunder; God and the believer in Jesus Christ are reconciled. What, then, have they to fear whose life is hid in Christ? Death cannot harm, the judgment-day need not terrify.

Glorious Refuge! it never fails—is never shut against the penitent soul—has never been shaken—and will yet resist the fire and deluge of the great day of wrath. This is the Ark, and they are eternally safe who are therein.—*J. M. Sherwood: National Preacher*, 1859, p. 217.

Rivers of Water in a Dry Place.

xxxii. 2. *As rivers of water in a dry place.*

The surface sense of this passage may refer to Hezekiah and to other good kings who were a means of great blessing to the declining kingdom of Judah; but its declarations are too full of meaning to be applied solely or primarily to any mere man. They are never fully understood until they are applied to Christ, the true King of righteousness, who confers the highest blessings upon His people. In Him there is a fulness and variety of blessing such as the varied metaphors of this passage fail to set forth. He is the true Man of whom Isaiah speaks; the man in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and who therefore can be, and is, "as rivers of water in a dry place."

I. The Metaphor. This implies, 1. Great *excellence* of blessing. How valuable is a river to the land through which it flows! So Christ is the source and the sustenance of the fertility, fruitfulness, and beauty of His people. 2. *Abundance* of blessing. Think of the vast floods that flow through the Amazon, the Ganges, the Indus, the Orinoco. So in Christ there is grace sufficient for all mankind. 3. *Freshness* of blessing (α). 4. *Freeness* of blessing. Though individuals may claim peculiar rights in rivers, all creatures drink of them freely, the dog as well as the swan. So may all, however vile, partake of the grace that is in Christ. 5. *Constancy* of blessing. Pools and cisterns dry up, but the river goes on for ever. So it is with Jesus; the grace to pardon and the power to heal are not spasmodic powers in Him, they abide in Him unabated for evermore.

II. A Special Excellence which the text mentions. "Rivers of water *in a dry place.*" Only the residents in a tropical country can fully appreciate that phrase. But Christ came to such a place when He came to our race. So He does when with His salvation He visits the individual soul. Were it not for Him, the souls, even of His people, under the influence of wealth or of poverty, of the cares or of the pleasures of life, would be always dry. But He refreshes, sustains, and fertilises those who otherwise would utterly faint and fail.

III. Practical Lessons. 1. *See the goings out of God's heart to man, and man's way of communing with God.* God's heart is an infinite ocean of goodness, and it flows forth to us through Jesus Christ, not in streams and driblets, but in rivers of grace and mercy. These streams we cannot purchase or merit, we have only to receive them; when we drink of the stream, we partake of God. 2. *See what a misery it is that men should be perishing and dying of soul thirst when there are these rivers so near.* Some have never heard of them; therefore help to the utmost the Missionary Society. Others who have heard of them are smitten with a strange insanity that leads them to turn away from them. 3. *Let us learn where, if we are suffering from spiritual drought and barrenness, the blame lies.* It cannot lie in Christ. 4. *If Christ is ready to be to us as rivers,* drink of Him, all of you (β.) Live near Him. Live in Him (γ.)—*C. H. Spurgeon: Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit,* No. 1243.

(α.) In a river we see not only excellence and abundance, but *freshness.* A pool is the same thing over again, and gradually it becomes a stagnant pond, breeding corrupt life and pestilential gases. A river is always the same, yet never the same; it is ever in its place, yet always moving on. Filled to the brim with living water, even as in ages long gone by, and yet flowing fresh from the spring, it is an ancient novelty. We call our own beautiful river, "Father Thames," yet he wears no furrows on his brows, but leaps in all the freshness of youth. You shall live by the banks of a river for years, and yet each morning its stream shall be as fresh as though its fountain had been unsealed but an hour ago when the birds began to awake the morning and the sun to sip the dews. Is it not so with our Lord Jesus Christ? Is He not evermore as bright and fresh as when first you met with Him?—*Spurgeon.*

(β.) Is Christ a river? then *drink of Him,* all of you. To be carried along on the surface

of Christianity, like a man in a boat, is not enough, you must drink or die. Many are influenced by the externals of religion, but Christ is not *in* them; they are on the water, but the water is not in them; and if they continue as they are they will be lost. A man may be in a boat on a river and yet die of thirst if he refuses to drink; and so you may be carried along and excited by a revival, but unless you receive the Lord Jesus into your soul by faith, you will perish after all.—*Spurgeon.*

(γ.) If Christ be like a river, let us be like the fishes, *live in it.* The fish is an ancient Christian emblem for Jesus and His people. I sat under a beech-tree some months ago in the New Forest; I gazed up into it, measured it, and marked the architecture of its branches, but suddenly I saw a little squirrel leap from bough to bough, and I thought, "After all, this beech-tree is far more to you than to me, for you live in it. It delights me, it instructs me, and it affords me shade, but you live in it and upon it." So we know something about rivers, and they are very useful to us, but to the fish the river is its element, its life, its all. So, my brethren, let us not merely read about Christ, and think of Him, and speak of Him, but let us live on Him, and in Him, as the squirrel in the tree and the fish in the river. Live *by* Him, and live *for* Him: you will do both if you live *in* Him.—*Spurgeon.*

[See also Outlines, RIVERS OF WATERS, XXX. 25, 26, and ENRICHING RIVERS, XXXIII. 21.]

COMFORT IN CHRIST.

XXXII. 2. *As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

This chapter begins with a prophecy of the Messiah, and of the happiness which the godly should enjoy under His reign (ver. 1). True as well as beautiful are its descriptions of Christ.

I. To the children of God this world is often "a weary land." 1. *Because of the labours they have to undergo.* This is a laborious world (Eccles. i. 8). Employment is in itself a blessing; it was provided for man in Eden; but every day the sun sets upon millions who are faint and weary, who are overwrought, and for whom there will be no sufficient rest until they lie down in the grave. To God's children it is a special cause of weariness that they are compelled to devote so much time in labouring for "the meat which perisheth," and that they have so little time for meditation and for communion with God. 2. *Because of the troubles to which they are exposed* (Job v. 7). Troubles attend every stage and condition of life. They are national, domestic, personal. The pains and evils of life commonly increase as its length is protracted. And there is nothing more wearisome than troubles. Many who can endure labour cannot endure trouble. This makes the heart stoop, and weakens the mind as well as the body. A troublesome world must be a wearisome world. 3. *Because of the perplexities by which they are harassed.* This is a dark world. What is past, what is present, as well as what is to come, lies involved in darkness. Life is full of mystery. Strange and unexpected events are continually happening, which disappoint the hopes and frustrate the designs of the wisest. Providence often baffles the interpretation and tries the faith even of the most devout. Wickedness is often triumphant, and virtue trampled under foot. Good men are often tired of living in a world which subjects them to continual anxiety and suspense. 4. *Because of the sin by which they are surrounded.* The moral atmosphere in which they live is uncongenial. The practices and principles with which they are daily brought into contact fill them with disgust, with indignation, and with grief (2 Pet. ii. 7, 8; Ps. cxix. 139, 156, 158; Acts xvii. 16; Ezek. ix. 4).

II. Whensoever God's children are weary of the world, they may find comfort in Christ. They may always find comfort. 1. *In the compassion of Christ.* He knows what it is to be faint and weary. He knows the heart of a pilgrim and stranger. And He has the tenderest compassion for His friends in distress or want. He is as pitiful to-day as He was when He tabernacled on earth. He feels all that His followers feel (Acts ix. 2; Heb. iv. 14–16). 2. *In the intercession of Christ.* As He prayed for Peter (Luke xii. 32) and for all His disciples before His crucifixion (John xvii.), so He still makes intercession for His

followers according to their necessities. And His intercession is always prevalent (John xi. 42). 3. *In the strength of Christ.* Weakness is the cause of weariness, and the weary may always find the strength they want in Christ (Phil. iv. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 7–10). 4. *In the government of Christ.* He sits as King in Zion. He has absolute control over the darkness, tumults, and confusions of the world. He governs all things for the benefit of His Church. Nothing can hurt it (Zech. ii. 8; Isa. xxvii. 3; Ps. ii. 1–5, 9). 5. *In the promises of Christ.* He has promised to give them peace even in this world (John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; xiv. 2, 3). These are great and precious promises, because they are sure promises.

APPLICATION.—Since the friends of Christ, when they are weary of the world, may always find comfort in Him—1. *They should not regard the things which make them weary of it as curses but as blessings.* It is a good thing to have our hold of the world loosened. It is a good thing to be driven to Christ. All their trials and sufferings are suited to prepare them to enjoy more peace and rest in Christ, than they could otherwise enjoy. When a man finds a covert in a great storm, he finds more pleasure in it than he does on a fine fair day. So Christians enjoy more real satisfaction and happiness in adversity than in prosperity, because while prosperity leads them to the enjoyment of the world, adversity leads to the enjoyment of Christ. 2. *They enjoy more happiness even in this life than sinners do.* Sinners often seem happier than saints, but theirs is a loud and transient mirth, whereas God's people have a deep and lasting joy. Autumn is oftener a pleasanter season than spring, but it deepens into the gloom and vigour of winter; whereas after the storms of March and the rain of April come the bright joyous days of summer. The life of the sinner is at best an autumn life, with autumn prospects, but the life of God's children is a spring life. And even here and now they (and they only) are filled with that peace of God which passeth all understanding, affords joy in sorrow, and gives rest to the weary. 3. *They ought never to be heard murmuring or complaining under any troubles or afflictions in which they may be involved.* This world is full of murmuring; and when God's people complain, it is highly offensive to God (Ps. cvi. 25, 26). But why should they complain? (Heb. xii. 11). And they have a present refuge, even Christ, in whom they may find "strong consolation." 4. *They ought never to be found depressed with anxiety as to the future* (Phil. iv. 6, 7).—*Dr. Emmons: Works*, vol. iii. 352–365.

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY.

xxxii. 8. ***But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.***

This prophecy relates to the time when the kingdom of Judah would relinquish its foolish dependence on Egypt. The king would reign in righteousness. Men and things would be called by their true names. Selfish injustice to the poor would contrast with considerate helpfulness. When generosity begins to be exercised on a large scale, the standard is raised. The raising of the standard tends to the general enlargement of the scale of benevolence.

Our subject is Christian liberality.

I. THE QUALITIES BY WHICH IT IS DISTINGUISHED.

1. *Sympathy.* It is the opposite of the disposition to act on the assumption that a man's own interest and happiness is the main end of his existence. It is the disposition that looks out to others, imagines their case, feels for them, desires their happiness. Difference of race, nationality, church, opinion sinks to nothing in its presence. It asks, What is the need?

Neither temporal nor spiritual need exhausts it. Spiritual need is the chief. It desires the salvation of all men. And when compassion for men's souls is tenderest, compassion for their temporal sufferings is usually also tenderest. The heart is often larger than the purse; but the purse-strings will not be closed. Our hospitals and other institutions for the relief of suffering and distress owe their origin and support mainly to Christian sympathy.

2. *Ingenuity.* "*Deviseth* liberal things." Many contribute to benevolent objects when solicited, but never originate anything in such a direction. There should be a thoughtful, holy solicitude to know what is needed, and how much of it we are able to do. Those act a useful part who discover for themselves and suggest to others suitable and feasible methods of usefulness. There should also be conscientious thoughtfulness as to the proportion to be established between what God gives to us and what we give to Him in return. As Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 20–22).

3. *Action.* Liberality does not terminate in feeling and thought (James ii. 15, 16; 1 John iii. 17, 18). It does not devise methods of usefulness and leave them to be carried out by others. The good Samaritan did not look at the man who had been robbed and half-killed on the road and pass on (Luke x. 33, 37). The woman who brought the alabaster box of ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus showed her love to Him more than if she had spoken a thousand endearing words.

4. *Willingness.* No selfish churl strikes out new plans of usefulness. Such as exists he unwillingly helps, if he helps them at all. According to the Christian idea, no amount of mere giving which does not come from the willing heart is accepted as liberality. The voluntary principle is alone recognised as the principle of liberality. And voluntaryism means willinghood (2 Cor. viii. 12).

5. *Continuance.* Not by one generous act, nor by such an act occasionally, can the title of liberality be won. Excitable persons impulsively promise, but reflection brings them to their true selves; and they either break the promise or fulfil it grudgingly. Some undertake Christian work; for a time do it; perhaps do it well; but *after* a time weary of its inconvenience, sacrifice, and slow results. Now the liberal man "stands by" his liberal things. The other reading is, "adheres" to them. Continuance in the race reaches the goal.

II. THE SOIL IN WHICH IT IS NOURISHED.

It is engendered and thrives in the soil of Christianity. For it is in accordance with—1. *Its Spirit.* It is the spirit of love. The man who drinks most into the spirit of Christianity will be most likely to feel such benevolent interest in humanity as will take practical shapes. It tends to the overthrow of selfishness. It fosters the spirit of self-sacrifice. 2. *Its Precepts.* We are commanded to stretch forth the helping hand to those in need. We are to extend the kingdom of Christ. Gifts and offerings in some form are demanded by the two great dispensations; by the Gospel no less than by the Law. He who lives for himself, giving forth nothing, or giving with grudging hand, has yet to learn the first principles of Christian obedience. 3. *Its Examples.* The newly formed Church in Jerusalem. Contributions throughout the churches afterwards for impoverished Christians there. Above all the example of Christ.

Do not suppose that liberality obtains no recognition. 1. *It becomes a source of pleasure.* Let any one put this to the test. And the pleasure is in proportion to the sacrifice it costs (Acts xx. 35). 2. *It is returned in blessing* (Prov. iii. 9, 10). We cannot explain how this comes about, because we cannot explain the way of God's Providence. Everything is in His hands. Can bless or blast your affairs. It certainly brings spiritual blessing. Exercises, develops, improves faith, love, self-denial. The indwelling Spirit of God is manifested in larger measure. Con-

science approves. 3. *It will obtain the final recognition.* It is all recorded. Nothing forgotten, however little. "Cup of cold water." "Ye have done it unto me." Let us strive for that commendation of Jesus, and for His commendation now, such as that He gave to the widow who gave her mites, and to the woman who did what she could.—*J. Rawlinson.*

A Call to the Careless.

xxxii. 11. *Be troubled, ye careless ones* (a.)

I. **Who are the careless ones in our own day?** 1. *Those who neglect the Bible.* Its main object is to arouse the attention of sinners. Claims and deserves attention. That man is indifferent to the welfare of his country who never examines the principles of its constitution, the character of its laws, &c. So he who neglects the Bible can never be regarded as a serious man. He is careless on the most momentous of all subjects. 2. *Those who neglect prayer.* All who have any proper feeling towards God must regard this as a solemn duty. Nature teaches its necessity and importance, the Scriptures enjoin it with great earnestness (Luke xviii. 1; 1 Thess. v. 17). 3. *Those who neglect the Sabbath.* This "made for man," appointed for his convenience and spiritual good. An institution of unspeakable importance as regards eternity—in fact, no religion without it. 4. *Those who neglect the institutions of the sanctuary.* Those anxious to know "what they must do to be saved" always prize the preaching of the Gospel. On the other hand, as the interest in religion declines, so will be our indifference to the means of grace. See you one who makes his attendance on God's house a matter of convenience, who avails himself of any trifling excuse to be absent, &c., there is a careless one. So also with those who are so absorbed in the pursuits of this life, so as to have neither leisure nor disposition to attend the place of prayer. 5. In a word, those are careless ones *who live in impenitence and unbelief.* Repentance and faith in Christ. The great interest of the soul cannot be secured without these, and no man can be said to take heed to the things that belong to his peace, without obeying Christ's commands concerning them.

II. **Why such ought to be troubled.** Those who are indifferent are disposed to remain so—carelessness perpetuates itself. Still there are reasons why such should be troubled. 1. *The fact that you are careless is a ground of alarm.* Carelessness, an evidence of our ignorance of the true condition of the soul in the sight of God. Something truly frightful in false security where the danger is real and great. With such this fancied security is the most alarming symptom. The sinner suffering from a disease which no human skill can remove — in danger of eternal death. How fearful then the indifference, how appalling the apathy of such! 2. *This indifference indicates a state of mind in which every blessing will be abused, and every warning neglected.* A habit of body that would render everything received for nourishment or for medicine useless would be dreadful; what, then, of that moral disease which perverts every gift and makes the diversified means which God employs accomplish nothing for our good? 3. *You ought to be troubled when you reflect what it is you are careless about,* viz., your salvation. The man who is indifferent about his health, or regardless of his temporal interest, is unwise; what, then, of one who hazards the salvation of his soul by neglect? Salvation is offered in Christ—indifference is unbelief. Why so eager after the acquisition of wealth, and indifferent about the true riches? 4. Another cause of alarm *is the exposure of your present position.* Neglect of the Gospel ensures destruction (Heb. ii. 3). This apathy a crime for which no amiableness or morality can atone. 5. *No*

more powerful means will be employed to awaken you to the concerns of your soul. God disclaims any responsibility for your loss (Isa. v. 4; Matt. xxiii. 37). Ministers have preached, Christian friends have entreated, the Holy Spirit has been sent down, and still you are careless. The very heathen will rise up in judgment. If one rising from the dead would not make those hear who had Moses and the prophets, what shall awaken those who have Christ and the apostles? 6. *This carelessness is induced, it is not natural.* A long process of hardening the heart is gone through before such a state of apathy is reached. But once ours, it has all the force of habit, and is not easily broken up (Matt. xi. 21). This indifference is *voluntary* (Acts xxiv. 25). Felix *might* have taken a different course. No iron necessity binds men to the fatal course they take, but a perverse will and an unbelieving heart. 7. *This carelessness is a state of mind that provokes God to withdraw His Spirit.* Deeply criminal. No apathy in heaven, there ought to be none on earth. Must it not offend God, to say that He has failed to reveal Himself in a way to interest His creatures? And yet men can be interested in a novel while the Gospel is neglected. Under the old dispensation He said, "My people would not hearken to My voice, so I gave them up to their hearts' lust." What of those who then reject the Son? 8. *This indifference will ultimately be broken up, and will aggravate condemnation a thousandfold.* Though retribution sleep, it must come and will not tarry. The Jews were spared forty years after the Saviour had wept over their doomed city. So with the sinner; there comes a time when he can be indifferent no longer; the realities of judgment and eternity produce a conviction which will go on deepening for ever. How it will embitter the soul then to dwell upon this carelessness of the past. Recollection itself a source of misery (Luke xvi. 25). What words can express the anguish of a soul thus reminded of lost opportunities, &c.?

Throw off this lethargy. From this moment seek the Lord with your whole heart, and call upon Him while He is near. Why run the desperate hazard of having to do all this on a dying bed?—*Mark Tucker, D.D.: National Preacher*, vol. vii. p. 138.

(a.) See outlines on chap. i. 3, p. 7–12.

The Essential Condition of Missionary Success.

xxxii. 13–15. *Upon the land of my people, &c.*

This chapter commences with a prophecy of the appearance and the kingdom of Christ. But instead of finishing the painting of that beautiful scene, with what might be anticipated as the effect of this appearance, Isaiah proceeds, in our text, to paint a scene of great desolation and barrenness. So, when our Saviour came, the effect of His appearance was by no means such as might have been expected; after gathering a few out of the Jewish nation, and thus planting the first Christian Church, He retired from the nation, on account of its impenitence and unbelief; and the land is still abandoned to desolation and barrenness. That barrenness, and the spiritual barrenness and blindness of that despised people, will continue until the arrival of the important event predicted in the last verse.

Though the immediate bearing of these words is upon the state and prospects of the Jewish people, yet they may be considered as assigning the reason why the nations of the earth continue in so wretched a state, with respect to things spiritual and divine, as they now exhibit; and as directing our expectations, and regulating our confidence, respecting the final termination of this state of things. The momentous truth taught in this passage is, that *the ultimate success of missions depends upon the communication of the Spirit.*

That the Spirit of God is afforded

at present to the Church is evident from its existence; for, since the Church is entirely a spiritual structure, raised and preserved by that Divine Spirit, if it had been utterly withdrawn the Church would have been annihilated. But the especial time here announced has not yet arrived; the Spirit is not "poured from on high" in that plenitude and variety of gifts which may reasonably be expected.

I. That the success of missions depends upon the outpouring of the Spirit of God, appears to be manifest, 1. from the Scriptures (*text:* chap. xli. 19, 20; Zech. iv. 6, xii. 10; Joel ii. 28–32, with Acts ii. 16–18; Ezek. xxxix. 29.) 2. From the record concerning the Great Captain of our salvation, He did not enter upon His work until He was anointed by the Spirit of God (Luke iv. 18, 19). 3. From the experience of the apostles. Until the effusion of the Spirit from on high, on the day of Pentecost, they were not qualified for their work in the nations to which they were sent. 4. From the testimony of the apostles. All their successes they attributed to a Divine agency (Acts xi. 21, xiv. 27, xvi. 14; 1 Cor. iii. 5–7, &c.) 5. From the testimony of those who have had the greatest success in preaching the Gospel in heathen as well as in Christian lands (*α.*) 6. From the records of their most eminent successes (*β.*) 7. From the nature of the work to be accomplished. Considering the state of man, it is impossible to suppose that anything less than a divine power can change the heart (*γ.*)

II. There are two reasons why we are in danger of forgetting our dependence on the Spirit of God. 1. We cannot arrange the time and manner in which the divine agency will be exerted; and we are called upon to exert ourselves in much the same way as though there were no such doctrine existing in our creed, and no such expectation existing in our minds. Consequently, even while strenuously attending to our duty, we are very apt to lose sight of that mysterious divine agency on which the success of all our efforts must depend, and to direct our attention exclusively to the apparatus we are setting in motion. 2. This is an invisible power, and is manifest to us only in its effects; whereas our own actions and plans are objects of distinct observation. It is one thing to believe that there is an agency of the Spirit, and quite another thing to have a deep and practical persuasion of it, and to regulate all our actions and expectations in dependence on it.

III. Some practical results which should follow from our belief that the success of missions depends on the agency of the Divine Spirit. 1. In attempting the work of the evangelisation of the heathen, we ought to renounce all expectations of success founded on our own strength or resources. 2. In connection with every attempt for the conversion of the heathen, there should be earnest prayer. In every period of the world, a spirit of prayer for this great object has been the precursor of real success. 3. In the manner in which we prosecute this work, we should be exceedingly careful not to grieve the Spirit of God. There must be nothing in our conduct or temper opposed to the simplicity and purity of the Christian dispensation. Our mission must not be made the instrument of ostentation and gratification, or of amusing the public by a display of gaudy eloquence. All rivalry between different societies that has not for its end the knowledge and service of God, is offensive in His sight. Let us guard against the least disposition to depreciate or hide in silence the success of others; which shall lead us to look coolly on the most splendid acts of missionary labour, unless they emanate from ourselves, or bring honour to our party. 4. Our dependence for the men and the means wherewith to carry on this great work, must rest absolutely and exclusively on God. Whensoever He puts forth the influence of His Spirit, some of His servants will devote themselves to the work, and others of them will

gladly contribute to it of their wealth (Isa. lx. 5–7). 5. The doctrine of the text teaches us to regulate our confidence with respect to the success of every particular mission, at the same time that it animates that confidence in regard to the final success of the success itself. 6. If success in any field of effort does not reward our toil, instead of charging God with any arbitrarily withholding of the help of His Spirit, let us examine the instruments wherewith we are endeavouring to effect so great and important a charge, and see if there be not in them something unworthy of the enterprise, and keeps back the needed blessing. 7. However success may seem to delay, let us acquiesce, without repining, in the dispensations of God; and let us point our views forward to a future period, that will certainly come, when the Spirit will be poured from on high, and when the Redeemer will take to Him His great power, and reign universally in the hearts of men.—*Robert Hall: Works*, vol. vi. pp. 158–180.

As regards the final and universal triumphs of the Gospel, believers cannot entertain a doubt. Glorious things are spoken of Zion, &c. We are explicitly assured that the kingdoms of this world shall one day become the kingdoms of Christ.

But what is to secure this? Our hope hangs upon one thing—the promise of the Spirit. Every past conquest has been the effect of union and communion with the Comforter; and our own ability for the enterprises of the future must be derived from the same source. The chapter begins with a cheering account of the approach of a brighter day following a season of gloom and depression, which is to be terminated finally and only by the pouring out of the Spirit from on high. So always. Large as are our resources, we were never more dependent on help from heaven than now. Without special Divine aid we can do nothing.

I. The Spirit of God must be with us, *or we shall not use the right means for converting the world.* Our work is a vast one, but we are not left in uncertainty as to the way in which it is to be accomplished. The Gospel made for man. Sending the knowledge of Christ abroad through the nations is the appointed method of saving men. (*a*) More faith is needed in God's instrumentality. The cause may seem unequal to the effect, but a Divine unseen agency accompanies it, and difficulties must pass away. (*b*) No part of our business to make experiments for the relief of human woe or guilt; or dig channels for our compassion other than those in which the Saviour's flowed. Calvary our sole expedient, &c. (*c*) We need to keep to the means by which all this is accomplished without deviation or faltering. A downward tendency in the best of men, even when engaged in the holiest of work, which nothing but a constantly exerted influence from God can effectually counteract. Charters, subscriptions, pledges will not do it. (*d*) Must not lay our strength out on extraneous matter. Our true service only performed when relying on Divine aid.

II. Unless the Holy Spirit be with us, *we shall never prosecute our work with proper energy.* An enterprise like ours cannot be expected to flourish unless it takes fast hold on the hearts and sympathies of its friends. It is a cause of too much import to be carried on lukewarmly. One of the main purposes of the Church, her own self-extension. How shall we get up to this state of feeling, this standard of action? Never! until we have more of the Spirit of God.

Again, half our strength has to be expended in trying to keep our enterprise up to lines already reached. We seem at times to be merely stationary, and this side by side often with great secular prosperity. Why this falling off? And that as contrasting with the success of primitive believers? They seem to have carried with them a never-failing assurance, that where they planted and watered, God would give the increase. The Church can

never come up to this standard until the Spirit is more copiously poured upon us from on high. We are shut up to this single resource.

III. That the Spirit must be given us, *or we shall never see our efforts crowned with success.* Something in a simple dependence on Divine help which imparts to our labours a character so earnest and decided as betokens a favourable result. We work best ourselves when we feel that God is working in us and by us. Nothing so nerves the arm and strengthens the heart as confidence in Him. So Luther, Whitfield, Paul wrought. Nothing else will keep zeal alive in the Church.

Hence arises (*a*) *Our encouragement.* Faith in the efficacy of the Gospel preached under the influence of the Holy Ghost is to be the mainspring of all our efforts. The Spirit is to take of the things of Christ and show them to men. We can only be straitened on that side. (*b*) *Our duty.* All converging to a single point—prayer.—*David Magee, D.D.: National Preacher,* vol. xxi. p. 221.

Let it be supposed that the invader and the conqueror have been in our land. Cultivation has disappeared, impoverishment and neglect reign over its once fertile and well-cared-for fields. The city, formerly the centre of life and activity, depopulated and desolated. Its factories dilapidated, its exchange a ruin, its streets overgrown with grass. Such was the ruin the prophet saw about to befall his country. How long would it continue? Until God should pour His Spirit upon the people, so as to turn them from their iniquities. When the moral scene changed, the material scene would also. Prosperity would return. The city would again be populated; the country resume its beauty and fertility; the wilderness would be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

It is a picture of the world's moral desolation without the Gospel; of the time when the power of the Gospel shall be displayed; and of the happy state of the world in that day of its power. Three topics are presented in the text; the necessity, the certainty, and the condition of the world's salvation.

I. ITS NECESSITY. It is a fallen world. Scepticism at present criticises the Christian representation of the moral state of human nature as too low, while its standard is too high. Whatever may be said of the latter part of the indictment, the former part must be denied. The alienation of the human heart from God; its aversion to His holiness; the depth of its pollution, as evinced in the crimes and vices which disfigure the face of society, and are too patent to be refined away. With all the restraining influences around us, we have enough at our hand to justify the representation that man is morally fallen and desolated. Add to this the idolatry, with its attendant cruelty and impurity, prevalent over so large a proportion of the human family. And to this the extreme and manifold wickedness of men in history. The Christian representation of the state of human nature is fully justified. There is universal sin. There is need of mercy, change, conversion. Not merely the adoption, by large masses of men, for various reasons, of new religious names and forms. It is a personal conversion. Men need the change one by one.

II. ITS CERTAINTY. We should despair of the world's conversion if our vision were limited to its existing state. We should pronounce it as hopeless as the attempt to tear up the everlasting mountains from their roots, or to drive the ocean from its bed. But we are not thus limited. We are not at liberty thus to limit our vision. In the Word of God we find it declared that the redeeming dominion of Christ shall be co-extensive with the globe. Plain statements sometimes, gorgeous imagery at other times, utterly inexplicable except in this way. Including these in our vision, we have nothing to do with the difficulties, but only with the great duty of their destruction.

Include in the vision the words of Christ. His declarations and commands before leaving the world contemplate the universal diffusion of His salvation. And we must include His work. The expenditure will bear some relation to the result. It cost the death of the incarnate Son of God. That the event is long delayed proves nothing when we remember how long the world had to wait for His coming.

III. ITS CONDITION. The moral desolation will continue until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high. The Gospel only saves as the Spirit makes it efficacious. The human heart and will are opposed to the entrance of the truth. Not only evidence but influence is required. It is essentially a spiritual work, and only the Holy Spirit is equal to it. It is a work in hearts opposed to God, and His power can alone produce the willingness which is the very essence of the saving change. Every time we pray for the conversion of sinners and for the coming of God's kingdom, we practically acknowledge the necessity of the Spirit's work. The universal necessity is the necessity of the individual case. The world's conversion is pictured out in the conversion of every sinner. The power of the Spirit is the security for the fulfilment of the word (Joel ii. 28–32; Acts ii. 17–21; Ezek. xxxvii. 1–14; John iii. 6–8; 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, iii. 6, 7).

From the text, then, we may learn two or three lessons relative to the work of Christ's Church in the world.

1. That all such work should be conducted in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit. Such dependence does not supersede labour, any more than the consciousness that the sun and the air and other mysterious influences of nature are necessary, supersedes the husbandman's labour.

2. That it should be conducted in a spirit of prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Whatever God promises to His Church, it is warranted to ask in prayer. Prayer is the condition, on the Church's part, on which the promise is suspended. In that wonderful passage of Ezekiel where the Spirit is promised in His cleansing and renewing power, the condition is expressly named (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). While the hundred and twenty disciples were gathered together praying, the Holy Ghost fell upon them. How often does the great missionary apostle ask those who have been brought to Christ to pray for him in his continued work among those who have not.

3. That all Christian effort should be conducted, therefore, in *expectation* of the outpouring of the Spirit. Do we not dishonour Him when we fail to believe in the Spirit's work as a living reality—when we do not *expect* prayerful work for Christ to be followed by proportionate success! "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high," all is desolation; when the Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high, all shall be beauty.—*John Rawlinson.*

(α.) Brainerd, Schwartz, and Eliot, and those who in every age have had the most success in turning men to righteousness, have been the first to declare that they were nothing. They, of all men, most ardently implored, and most entirely depended upon, the agency we are now contemplating; and their success appears to have been more in proportion to their earnest solicitude in seeking this blessing, than to any other cause.—*Hall.*

(β.) Look at the history of those who have been the most successful missionaries to the heathen, and see whether you cannot trace certain results for which you cannot account on any other hypothesis than that most momentous one of a divine influence, at certain periods, accompanying their labours. In the history of Brainerd and Eliot, and others, you perceive that for a considerable time there seem to have been the same efforts employed, the same doctrines taught, the same earnest and zealous prayers, and the same watchfulness over their own hearts, and yet no saving effect produced on others: all still remained barren; no desirable movement of the heart was excited; and this continued for a long period. Such was the state of things when Brainerd first undertook the mission to the Indians; but, after a considerable time, while he was propounding only the same doctrines, and using only the same means, the Spirit of God put forth its energy, and divine communication was imparted at one season "like a rushing, mighty wind," at others "like the dew and the rain from heaven," softening and thus opening the

heart which had resisted the entrance of sacred truth, and causing the tear of genuine penitence to steal down the cheek. Nobody could doubt that there was some one greater than a missionary there;—that the Spirit of God had changed the barren soil to sacred ground, and had wetted it, "like Gideon's fleece, with the dews of heaven." And so it is, my brethren, that every person who has had any long acquaintance with the Christian ministry, is aware that there are certain periods of barrenness and certain periods for bearing fruit. The same talents, whether great or small, may be brought into action; but there shall be some seasons in which efforts, in no way special, shall be crowned with extraordinary success.—*Hall.*

(γ.) Were it the design of God merely to build a foundation already laid, or to repair a dilapidated edifice, one might talk of the efficacy of human suasion; but when that which is to be done is to create a new principle, to pour new life into the soul, to give "a new heart," to plant new seeds in a soil where all has been barrenness and desolation, to turn waters into new channels, to effect a total change of heart and character,—what can accomplish all this but an almighty power? Human suasion can operate only on principles which already exist. When Demosthenes, with his powerful eloquence, excited the Athenians to combat, he only called into action, by a skilful grouping of motives, and an appropriate exercise of his genius, principles already existing, but which had lain dormant. He created nothing new; he transformed them not into new creatures, but only roused and stimulated those principles which had animated the bosoms of nations in resisting tyranny in every age. But when the apostles went forth to preach faith in Christ, they proposed to make a change in the mind and heart of man to which there was no natural tendency; they required a creature "dead in trespasses and sins" to awake to Christ; they proposed to convert him into a devoted servant, a subject most loyal, affectionate, and ardent; and how was it possible that mere human art or force could accomplish such changes as these?

The Gospel is the instrument of God, and wonderfully fitted by Him for His work; but even *it* is nothing more than an instrument; and when it is successful and baffles every human effort exerted against it, it is because it is wielded by an omnipotent arm.—*Hall.*

H.E.I., 1400–1405, 3432–3442, 4106–4113.

The Moral Wilderness Transformed.

xxxii. 15. *Until the Spirit be poured upon us, &c.*

This chapter contains three distinct and important topics: the great and inestimable blessings resulting from the reign of Christ; a denunciation of the divine judgments on an ungrateful and rebellious people, and especially on the supine and careless women of Judea; and an assurance of more auspicious days.

I. The mind of man resembles a moral wilderness. This was not the case originally. In paradise all was moral attraction and glory. But, in consequence of man's apostasy from God, his powers have been withered, and his divine beauty has been defaced. The mind of man is a moral wilderness—1. As it is a seat of sterility and desolation. 2. As, till it is transformed, it is of little use, because its best powers are not consecrated to God. 3. As it is the soil where noxious and destructive plants exist and flourish.

II. The means appointed for the cultivation of the mind of man are to be diligently employed, because, 1. These means are unfolded to us in the Gospel. 2. God requires us to employ them. 3. The divine sanction and encouragement have been given to those who have diligently used them (H. E. I., 3424–3465).

III. The best and most powerful means will be unavailing without the agency and influences of the Spirit.

IV. But with the influence of the Holy Spirit, a great moral transformation will be effected. 1. There will be a scene of cultivation; the wilderness will be converted into a fruitful field; enclosed, cleansed, irrigated, carefully tilled; presenting a beautiful appearance to the eye, and refreshed with the dews and rains of heaven. 2. There will be a scene of fertility; as a field, it will be rich in the variety and luxuriance of its produce; all the graces of the Holy Spirit will be fully and beautifully exemplified. 3. There will be a scene of grandeur. The fruitful field will be counted for a forest. A fine forest is a majestic and striking feature in a landscape. There

is dignity, magnitude, elevation; all these moral characteristics are found in the mind on which the Spirit has been poured out. The saints will grow in grace, and increase with all the increase of God.

V. Learn from this subject, 1. The importance of honouring the Spirit by reverence, worship, obedience, confidence. 2. The necessity of waiting for the Spirit. Though He tarry, yet we are perseveringly to wait. 3. The duty of praying for the Spirit, and of expressing unfeigned gratitude for every communication of His grace.—*G. Clayton: The Pulpit*, vol. xvii. p. 190.

Peace the Work of Righteousness.

xxxii. 17. *The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*

A large part of the book of Isaiah is taken up in setting forth the glories and the blessedness of Christ's kingdom. Sometimes this is done by grand images drawn from all that is brightest in the outward world (xxx. 26). Sometimes the great change to be wrought in mankind is spoken of under the figure of a like change in the beasts of the field (xi. 6–9). Again, in other places, as in the text and the adjoining verses, the description puts on more of a moral and spiritual character, and declares how God will be glorified in the hearts and lives of men (vers. 15–17). On reading these descriptions of a time when the world is to be full of peace and blessedness, we can hardly help wishing we were in such a world. But that time is not yet come. Many places may we find, where all seem to be bent on hurting and destroying one another. But the sun himself, with his all-piercing eye, though he beholds every dwelling of man, cannot see a single village which is the abode of peace and quietness and assurance for ever. Nor has he in all his journeys seen such a state of things. Did the prophet, then, see falsely? Was the vision which he saw a lying vision? Not so. If the "work," the effect, is wanting, it is that the cause is wanting. Did righteousness prevail upon the earth, there peace would also prevail. Wherever we find anything like true righteousness, and according to the degree of the likeness, we also find peace. Whatsoever is done to promote righteousness will also promote peace.

"The work of righteousness shall be peace." The words have a sweet sound; but when we think of the whole meaning that lies wrapt up in them, they may well strike us with awe. For while they declare that righteousness shall produce peace, they at the same time imply that nothing but righteousness shall or can. How, then, can peace ever abide upon earth, or dwell in the heart of man?

Another disturbing recollection is, that when it has pleased the all-righteous God to show forth His righteousness, as in the days of Noah, the work of that righteousness was not peace, but horror, and desolation, and destruction. Even when the ministers and executors of earthly righteousness pass through a land, they do not bring peace to the culprits whom they visit. How, then, can the perfect righteousness of God bring peace to the sinful race of man? There is but one way, a way purposed by God in the counsels of His unfathomable wisdom, the way whereby He vouchsafes to bestow His own righteousness upon man, to the end that He may make man partaker of His peace.

Here some may object, that righteousness, with its sternness and terrors, does not seem to be, of all virtues and graces, the one best fitted to be the parent of peace. Rather, they may say, is peace the work of mercy: for that mercy alone can produce peace, at least in sinners; wherefore we are wont to pray God to grant us *pardon and peace*. This is true. Unless mercy be shown to sinners, they can never enjoy peace. Yet, unless mercy go

along with righteousness, mercy cannot produce peace. If mercy allowed the sinners to abide in their sins, they would still be under the sentence which declares that there is no peace to the wicked (α.) Christ will never give peace alone. He will only give it along with righteousness,—first righteousness and then peace. Unless He had been the Lord our Righteousness, He could not have been the Prince of Peace. Therefore they who will not receive His righteousness, cannot receive His peace. To them He brings no peace, but a sword.

But although the course of this world has never been answerable to the magnificent visions of ancient prophecy, still in some measure the prophecies have been fulfilled. To the godly, to all who believe in Christ and love Him, to all who desire to serve and obey Him, He has indeed brought peace; and even amid the endless tumults and troubles and jarrings of the world, they feel that He has done so. They feel that He has set them at peace with God, by making them partakers of that righteousness, of which peace is the work. Moreover, there is hardly one of our Lord's commandments which does not tend, in proportion as we obey it, to fill our hearts with peace, which does not dry up one source or other of disquieting, harassing care (β.)

We may now perceive why there is so little peace in the world. It is because there is so little righteousness. The effect cannot exist without the cause. The one simple commandment, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," were it followed through all the branching duties into which it spreads, would turn the earth into a garden of peace.

"For the wicked," God has said, "there is no peace." But light is sown for the righteous, the light of joy and peace. The true disciple of Christ, he who has sought to be clothed in Christ's righteousness, will always enjoy peace, even here on earth. He will enjoy it in every condition of life. In riches, in poverty, in health, in sickness, in every outward circumstance of life, in the hour of death, the godly, and they alone, enjoy peace: in the day of judgment they, and they alone, will enjoy peace. And the peace they will have enjoyed till then will only have been a poor faint foretaste of the peace into which they will then enter, of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and in the full enjoyment of which they will live thenceforward through eternity. —*Julius Charles Hare, M.A.: Sermons Preacht in Herstmonceux Church*, pp. 325–346.

The Bible is the revelation of a gracious remedy for evil. Points out rightful claims of the divine government. Charges the human race with disregard of those claims. Man is guilty of unrighteousness. There is universal sin. It is in man's nature. It constitutes a moral disqualification for return. God's remedial plan comprehends the provision of pardoning mercy, and of regenerating mercy. The former is found in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which constitutes a righteous ground on which the penal consequences of sin may be remitted. The latter, in this no less wonderful work of the Holy Spirit by which the sinner's disposition undergoes a change that makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus. Let it be supposed that this is the universal experience: instead of unrighteousness, the righteousness that springs from such contact with Christ by His Spirit universally prevails. It is a change of which we do not despair. We are taught to expect it. Thus the text will be universally fulfilled.

I. INTERNATIONALLY.

One of the most awful facts of human history is the extent to which war has marked its track. In the causes of all wars unrighteousness is found. But if the supposition we have made were a reality, wars would become impossible. Nations and their rulers would repress the desire to possess themselves of what is not their own. If different interests induced different opinions between them,

wise and righteous arbitration would prevent their imbruing their hands in each other's blood. There would be "quietness and security for ever" (Isa. ii. 4, xi. 6–9).

II. SOCIALLY.

1. Would the scenes witnessed in our streets, and the revelations of police courts continue, if all men were characterised by the righteousness contemplated in our text? Because men are unrighteous, they encroach upon each other. The religion of Christ can be ill spared. Where its influence prevails, society is better, happier, more peaceful, more secure than elsewhere.

2. Think of the family. In the home all exhibit their true selves. Selfishness and injustice may render it a place of incessant strife. But our Christian homes, even where allowance has been made for infirmities and peculiarities, are usually pervaded by an atmosphere of peace and love. The influences that surround them produce mutual forbearance and studiousness of others, restrain the harder and develop the softer passions. Just in the measure in which the subduing influences of Christian character prevail will our homes be secure from strife and discomfort.

3. Think of the Church. There are divisions in the Church, it is said. But there is less alienation of heart than is commonly supposed. The common Christian's sentiments override the separated denominations. So within the churches. Not many, in proportion to the whole, are divided. Animosity, as arising from difference of opinion, is restrained by Christian love. And if all were perfectly Christian, there would be none.

III. PERSONALLY.

1. There is peace with God. Because there is reconciliation in Christ.

2. There is peace within. The storms of distress and fear raised by the sense of sin are allayed by the cross. The discomfort of unsettled life-purposes is terminated by a decision with which the soul is satisfied. Its peace is enhanced by converse with heaven.

It is abiding peace. The peace in all aspects continues as long as the righteousness. The holiness of heaven, and therefore its peaceful rest, will continue for ever.

Have we this righteousness? Have we it in heart, in sympathy, in life? If not, we are on the side of unrighteousness. We are insecure. We need to be born again. O seek to possess and extend it.—*J. Rawlinson.*

(α.) We may see this in human things. When a parent does not uphold *order and law* in his family, there will be no peace in that family. When a government does not uphold order and law in a nation, there will be no peace in that nation. They are to be upheld mercifully indeed; but still they are to be upheld. Now in man both are imperfect, both his righteousness and his mercy; and therefore they are ever jarring. Sometimes he will lean to the one, sometimes to the other; and so neither produces the work of peace. But in God both are at one: neither shall hinder, neither can give way to the other. Sooner shall the heavens split, like a breaking wave, into foam, and melt away, than the slightest shadow of anything that is not perfectly righteous shall pass over the righteousness of God. Accordingly it could only be when perfect mercy and perfect truth met together, that righteousness and mercy could kiss each other. And thus alone shall any ever enjoy perfect peace, when they have received the full forgiveness of their sins from the perfect mercy of God, and are clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Even in heaven there can be no peace, except it be the work of righteousness.—*Hare.*

(β.) When He teaches us that the eye of God is ever watching over us, and the hand of God ever providing over us,—when He commands us to pray to God with confidence as to our heavenly Father, and to make all our wants and wishes known to Him,—hereby, if we give heed to His bidding, He at once hushes all those never-ending, still-beginning anxieties, which are the thorns and thistles planted by the curse in the human heart. When He teaches us to love our neighbours, and to forgive, nay, to love our enemies, He roots up all the causes which destroy peace and breed quarrels between man and man. Every passion that we subdue is so much gain to our peace; for every passion is a peace-breaker. Covetousness, ambition, lust, drunkenness, vanity, pride are peacebreakers. All these passions set us at variance with neighbours; all of them set us at variance with ourselves. Whereas, contentment, temperance, sobriety, chastity, modesty, meekness are peacemakers.—*Hare.*

THE PEACEFUL HABITATION.

xxxii. 18. *And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation* (a.)

No doubt "the peaceable habitation" is found in moral dispositions created within by Divine grace. Here is, 1st. The Chamber of *Holiness*. Oh, the sweet tranquillity of a holy life! 2. Here is the hallowed Chamber of *Resignation* to the Divine will. If the soul is, by Divine grace, able to be still in the midst of temptation, it will also be still in the midst of personal trial. 3. Here is *Trust* in God's providence. This is the observatory, and like all observatories, it is high and clear. Other observatories boast that from them you may see the stars in the day-time; but from this, you may see the sun in the night-time.—*E. Paxton Hood: Dark Sayings on a Harp*, pp. 361–368.

(a.) See CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, ch. xxxiii. 20.

SPIRITUAL HUSBANDRY.

xxxii. 20. *Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.*

Two explanations of this description of agricultural life. The first refers it to the practice of literally sowing on the waters. In some parts of the East, particularly in the sowing of rice, the time chosen is when the rivers overflow their banks. Cattle are turned into the wet land to tread it and prepare it for the seed, which is then cast upon the water. It subsides into the ground and yields a quick harvest. If this is the allusion, the corresponding passage will be Eccles. xi. 1. The other explanation refers it to the sowing of seed in soil that is well watered by its proximity to some river, and to such a state of security that the oxen and asses may be turned upon the land to feed at large, without fences to limit their excursions. Either way the general idea is the same. It is the close of the beautiful description of peaceful prosperity after the return from captivity. The land would be cultivated in security, the harvests gathered in peace; a splendid contrast to the desolation of a country which has been the seat of war.

We apply the text to the privilege of labouring for the production of a moral harvest in human souls by the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here is—

I. AN ANALOGY BETWEEN THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL HUSBANDRY. Our present subject is not our own spiritual culture, although that is of supreme importance and the primary qualification for the cultivation of other souls. We are always sowing seed, the fruit of which is in our character and destiny, in time and eternity (Gal. vi. 7, 8).

The analogy between the moral and material husbandry is very obvious (1 Cor. iii. 6–9, ix. 10, 11; James iii. 18; Matt. xiii. 3–32). This is the great work committed to the Church. We are to tell the story of God's love; to make known the ruin; to proclaim the salvation; to persuade men.

Now, this supposes several things:—
1. *Opportunity.* By the restoration of Israel to their own land, they would have the opportunity of which they had been long deprived. There have been times when endeavours to teach God's word was prohibited. In some lands it is so still. There are persons who will not hear. There are classes and circles, higher and lower, which are inaccessible to you. None of us is responsible for sowing the seed when there is no opportunity. But in so far as opportunity exists, or can be made, it behoves all to avail themselves of it to the full extent of their power. Mothers have the opportunity with

their children. Sunday-school teachers. Doors opening in heathen lands. 2. *Capacity.* To sow a field requires some knowledge of the kind of work. City men would make sorry work. So the spiritual sowing requires some capacity. Two mistakes may be made. There is the mistake of those who think any kind of work will do; and of those who estimate the requirements so highly and their own power so humbly that they never venture anything. The latter deterrent operates largely. It falls in with the love of ease. It is sometimes said that the extension of popular education demands a higher class of Sunday-school teachers, for instance, than sufficed some time ago. Many Christians think their own education inadequate. It is a mistake. If we cannot realise our ideal, let us do our best. Besides, experience does not show that boys and girls are ahead of teachers of average intelligence. And spiritual earnestness is a greater qualification than even intellectual endowment. Capacity for Christian work, like any other, perhaps more than any other, increases by exercise. 3. *Interest.* He who would succeed must be interested in his work. He who dislikes it or is indifferent to its results will not do it well. Commonly what was undertaken merely as an occupation, or for advantage, becomes a pleasure. The various labours of the husbandman interest him. And this is essential to the spiritual sower. There must be a disposition for the work. It presents attractions only to such as are in sympathy with its great ends. There must be sincere belief of the truth, thorough conviction of its necessity to man, and a benevolent desire for the widest dissemination of its blessings. Working in this spirit, your interest in it will constantly deepen. By the prospect of harvest you will be animated. With the heart in the work and the love of Christ in the heart, the sowing time will be full of spiritual interest. 4. *Diligence.* "All waters." This suggests earnestness, energy, promptitude. Throw all your energy into this work. The husbandman watches everything that bears on his husbandry. Business men spare no pains in working out their arrangements. We must be equally diligent.

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF BEING ENGAGED IN THE SPIRITUAL HUSBANDRY.

1. *In the work itself.* It becomes a pleasure. Knowledge and experience of the truth increase by communication, as seed by being sown. Spiritual enjoyment is deepened. Christian character grows. Many can say the sowing days are the happiest. 2. *In the consciousness of usefulness.* It is not labour in vain. Assured that we shall reap if we faint not. Already there are signs. Evil is prevented. One and another are being trained to goodness. The future career of those among whom you sow will be influenced in the most valuable way. Some will have their passage to the grave helped. The future world will be brightened to them, as well as the present. 3. *In the Master's approbation.* As the work goes on, the consciousness of this is a blessedness. And when this world is left behind, His "well done."

Address—1. Those who are sowing, with words of encouragement. 2. Those who ought to be, with words of exhortation.—*J. Rawlinson.*

THE USE OF OPPORTUNITIES.

xxxii. 20. *Blessed are they that sow beside all waters, &c.*

I. We may use the language of the text *as a warning against the neglect of the least opportunity of usefulness to others.* The prophet pronounces a blessing upon those who are prepared to scatter seed, not only where there is a probable prospect of a rich harvest, but upon whatsoever soil God shall bring them in contact with. It is not only by the waters that are

sweet and sparkling that the sowing is to be carried on, but beside the floods that seem likely to overwhelm. We are to maintain a lively sense of our obligation to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Even those who are alive to the reality of the effect which one man's life and conversation may have upon another, nay, who are desirous to be useful to their brethren in Christ, are under a great temptation to be ruled by predilections for or against particular persons, and to regard some as too proud, too insincere, too thoughtless to reward their labour. Or their affections are so absorbed in one or two individuals, united with them by blood or friendship, that they are rendered comparatively indifferent about the influence they may exert upon others. But whether we choose or no, our power for good or evil extends over all who come within our shadow, and we should neglect no opportunity to make it a power for good (H. E. I. 1857–65, 4596).

II. *We should not neglect any opportunity of securing benefit for ourselves.* Every period of existence is to be spent unto God. Swift and resistless the waters of life glide on. But beside them all, the Christian sows his good seed. Equally in youth, middle age, and in advancing years, whatsoever his hand finds to do, he does it heartily, as unto the Lord; and in each he reaps a harvest according to his sowing in that which preceded it. Blessed through eternity will he be who sowed wisely and liberally beside all the waters of life.—*J. R. Woodford, M.A.: Sermons preached in Bristol*, pp. 228–243.

It should be the ambition of us all to be useful. The difference between one man who lives a useful, and another who lives a useless life, is simply this—the one improves his opportunities for doing good and making others happy, while he ministers to his own well-being; and the other lives only for himself, and reaps the barren harvest of his selfishness. Life comes but once to each of us, and blessed are they who, bearing this ever in mind, are careful to "sow beside all waters."

I. Those who wish to be useful should never forget the many favourable opportunities for sowing seed *on the clear and untroubled waters of childhood.* II. Another opportunity for scattering precious seed is *on the troubled waters of strife* (Matt. v. 9). III. Another, *on the stagnant and muddy waters of doubt and unbelief.* It often happens that the Christian is obliged to listen to the vapid and senseless discourse of those who seek to bring the religion of the Son of God into contempt, and if he would be prepared for such occasions of seed-sowing, he ought to be a diligent student of the Word of God, and of such works as will give him a right understanding of it. IV. *There will be times when words of comfort may be spoken to bewildered souls about to embark on "the narrow sea" which divides this world from the next.—John N. Norton: Golden Truths*, pp. 73–81.

PROVIDENCE.

xxxiii. 1. *Woe to thee that spoilest, &c.*

Dr. Geikie says: As a nation the Assyrians are branded as treacherous, untruthful, and lawless (Nah. iii. 1; Jonah iii. 8). No treaty could bind them; might was right; and when interest seemed to demand it, they "regarded no man" (xxxiii. 8). Their pride was that of a race which looked on all others as their natural inferiors (Zeph. ii. 15; Ezek. xxxi. 10, 11; Isa. x. 7–14, xxxvii. 24–28). (α.)

The text brings before us *the doctrine of an overruling Providence.*

We see an overruling Providence at work—1. *In meting out punishment to the wicked* (H. E. I. 4604, 4612).

2. *In accomplishing a just retribution.* The Assyrian is paid back by the Babylonian (Rev. xiii. 10); Jacob's treachery is returned to him in his son's deceit (1 Tim. v. 24; P. D. 2995). 3. *In bringing good out of evil.* Wicked men overreach themselves; the devil is outwitted. The short-sighted vengeance of man becomes an instrument of perfecting the higher nature of the people of God, whom they oppress; the fire of man's wrath is transformed into the refining fire of Divine purification (Mal. iii. 3).—*J. Macrae Simcock.*

(a.) Some time before the return of the Assyrians, Hezekiah had sought to deprecate the wrath of Sennacherib, of which terrible rumours had reached him from Lachish. For this end he had sent ambassadors, in the hope that they might possibly convince the great king that no treachery was intended, and save the country from a second invasion, or possibly even obtain favourable terms for Lachish itself. The embassy had found him at the city, which was soon after taken by storm, and delivered to the tender mercies of the soldiery. A slab from his palace at Nineveh, now in the British Museum, shows him in state "receiving plunder of the town of Lachish." He sits on a throne before his tent, two arrows in one hand and his bow in the other, while prisoners are being brought before him, an officer, attended by a guard, stating the facts respecting them. Two eunuchs stand with feather flaps to wave over him for coolness, and to keep away the flies. Two horses, ready for his use, are behind, soldiers with tall lances attending them. The front rank of prisoners before him kneel to implore mercy, and behind them is a long file of their unfortunate companions. Some whose fate has already been decided have been led a short way off and killed; others may be spared as slaves. A chariot with two horses stands near—perhaps that of Sennacherib—and numerous fruit-trees over the whole slab show the fruitfulness of the country. A strong force of horse and foot on the right of the picture guards the king.—*Geikie.*

The Saint's Attitude in the Time of Trouble.

xxxiii. 2. *O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for Thee: be Thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.*

Like its predecessor, this prophecy belongs to the time of distress and fear incident on the threatened Assyrian invasion. Dependence on Egypt had failed. So had Hezekiah's present to the invader. He had accepted the present, but had still pressed on. The south of Judah was covered with his soldiers. Isaiah lifts up this prayer for his country. An example to Christians to interest themselves in the politics of their country, and to include them in their prayers. We have never known the terrible presence of an invader; but there is always occasion for appeal to the divine Governor and Helper. It is no mark of spirituality of mind to exclude national affairs from thought, as belonging to a sphere that has nothing to do with God or with prayer.

The prophet's eye saw, in the immediate future, the frustration of the invader's plans. The God of Israel would interpose. The invasion was unjust; the negotiations had been conducted deceitfully by the enemy; ruin would fall on his head (ver. 1). But the certainty of deliverance was no reason for the relaxation of effort, or for abstinence from prayer. God's promise is the encouragement and directory of prayer. Therefore he cries, "O Lord, be gracious unto us," &c.

The prayer of the text is applicable to any time of trouble in the personal experience of any Christian. It is a time that may come to any one. It should enter into our calculations about the future, however exempt from it at present. It should be prepared for, as for old age, or death. We never know when it hangs over us, nor in what form. To all it comes occasionally; to some frequently; to some constantly; to some severely. Often from quarters whence least expected. Things and persons most precious to us are sometimes the occasion of bitterest grief. The common lot. We can only really prepare for

it by the possession of resources which it cannot diminish. This is one of the points at which Christians have so largely the advantage over others. God is always with them, and always accessible.

Our text represents the saint's attitude in "the time of trouble." He cries to God and waits on God. He cries as he waits, and waits as he cries.

I. HE CRIES TO GOD.

How precious to have a friend so interested in you that anything you say about your trouble will find an interested listener. It is a relief to speak to such a friend. Many of God's people find this relief every day. Many a trouble can be told to none but Him who keeps every secret and sympathises with every distress (P. D. 462, 463).

What do we need in the time of trouble? It is all in this prayer: GOD HIMSELF. Each petition resolves itself into something that God is, and is to us.

1. *His Graciousness.* The root of everything must be the divine disposition. He might be malevolent, unpitying, unmerciful. There might be a cause of separation sufficient to prevent any favourable access to Him. In the case of multitudes there is such a cause. Many live without God, ignore Him, disregard His authority, yet in the time of trouble imagine they may fly to Him, in the face of His word, which says until sin is abandoned there can be no friendship with Him. He has provided a gracious way of reconciliation. The first step we must take is the coming to Him through the Saviour for the mercy that obliterates all past transgressions. In many cases the time of trouble is sent as the means of leading us to the Saviour. To be assured of His gracious disposition while He permits the trouble, goes far towards the comfort of the troubled heart. He loves you although you are under discipline. The sun shines in full splendour although it is hidden behind a cloud. We may wait patiently for the trouble to pass away, so long as we can confidently ask the Lord to be gracious unto us.

2. *His Strength.* "Be Thou their arm every morning" The time of trouble reveals our weakness. Mental energy, courage, bodily power often succumb under the pressure of heavy trouble. We realise the value of a strength beyond our own. It is better to pass through "the time of trouble" with God for our arm every morning, than to be exempt from trouble and left without Him. Paul groaned under the pain of his thorn in the flesh and besought the Lord thrice to take it away. But Christ's assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness," together with his experience of its sufficiency, made him glory in his infirmity. We need the arm of God for defence against the enemy; to lean upon when ready to faint; to strengthen us for the work that may be necessary to our extrication from trouble.

3. *His Salvation.* From some troubles salvation cannot be in the shape of restoration of the previously existing state of things. The young man loses his precious wife and child; and in their grave it seems that every interest for him is buried. They cannot be restored. But God's salvation can come to him in the form of a richer spiritual experience, a deeper acquaintance with His word and way, a completer consecration to His service, and a larger inflowing of divine consolation than he could have known without it. But there are some troubles from which salvation comes by their cessation: sicknesses, and business reverses. They are severe while they continue. But deliverance comes. In some cases greater prosperity is realised than formerly, to which, in God's wonder-working Providence, the trouble was necessary. Joseph in Egypt. Job. The trouble may have been severe temptation. If saved, you are the stronger for it. Cry to God in trouble. Let it be the time of special prayer.

II. HE WAITS ON GOD.

"We have waited for Thee." This ever accompanies true prayer. The

believer looks for the blessing he has asked. It implies, 1. *Faith.* That God hears. Faith has a very close relation to prayer. 2. *Expectation.* There may be degrees of confidence, but there must be more or less of expectancy. The sailor's mother watches at the window for the ship in which her son is coming. 3. *Patience.* Wait God's time. Until His end is accomplished. Thus let the Church wait for the coming of Christ, which will be full salvation.

May we know by experience the blessedness of knowing God in time of trouble! Blessed is the people that is in such a case. Come and enjoy this blessedness. Decide for the Lord Jesus Christ. The world is insufficient. Renounce it.—*J. Rawlinson.*

The Importance of Religious Knowledge.

(Sunday School Anniversary.)

xxxiii. 6. ***And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation.***

Primarily these words seem to have been spoken of Hezekiah, of the happiness and security which the Jews experienced under his reign,—a reign which was evidently blessed of God to their good; but, like many other predictions, it has a larger application. It refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; to the blessings resulting from the reign of Christ over His redeemed people (chap. xxxii. 1, 2). The declaration is, that in the time of the Messiah there should be a diffusion of knowledge so wide and efficacious that society should be rendered stable and tranquil by it; that this wisdom and knowledge should produce salvation, or deliverance from temporal and spiritual calamities; and that this salvation should be a strong one. This has been already in part fulfilled; but only in part. Christianity introduced religious light; and that light became the parent of every other kind of useful and excellent knowledge. So little opposition is there between Christianity and true science, that all the most important discoveries of a scientific nature, all the knowledge whence nations derive power and refinement, have occurred in Christian nations, and Christian nations only. It is now generally agreed that it is only from the diffusion of wisdom and knowledge that we can expect settled and tranquil times. But we must remember that there is no real connection between mere scientific knowledge and moral influence. The proposition which I shall endeavour to establish is, that *no moral influence is exerted, except by the truths revealed to us in the Scriptures; and that whatever effects are produced by knowledge of any other kind, those effects do not constitute a real moral improvement, either of society or of individuals.*

I. I APPEAL TO THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE. The Bible is favourable to knowledge. Every Jewish parent was commanded to teach his children diligently the laws and statutes which God had given, and the historical circumstances with which they were connected; that so they might be, in the sight of all the nations, a wise and understanding people. The New Testament likewise commands all believers diligently to study the facts and doctrines of their faith. Neither the Mosaic nor the Christian religion was founded in ignorance. But throughout the Old Testament, where any moral influence is ascribed to wisdom, it is the true knowledge of God that is to be understood, and that only. So in the New Testament, so far from finding any intimation that mere knowledge, of any and every kind, is sufficient to exert a moral influence on the heart and mind, we find passages in which it is represented as operating to the hindrance of salvation (Matt. xi. 25; 1 Cor. i. 21; Col. ii. 8).

II. I APPEAL TO REASON. Reason shows—1. *That religious knowledge tends to produce moral results.* This is the natural effects of the truths it presents to the mind, and of the standard of duty which it holds up before us. 2. *That all kinds of knowledge which exert no power upon the conscience must leave the life unreformed.* He who expects a moral result from mere worldly knowledge, looks for an effect without a cause; as well might he expect a man to become a skilful botanist by studying astronomy. To improve the morals you must give moral instruction; and this is what no branch of science even professes to do. We take nothing from the just value of science by confining it to its proper objects. One science only can improve your morals, even that divine philosophy which describes, with authority, the manner of life to which God, your Sovereign and Judge, requires you to conform.

III. I APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE. Reason shows that between religious knowledge and morality there is a connection, and that between morality and any other knowledge there is no connection whatever (*α*). And this is also the testimony of experience in all times and countries (*β*).

CONCLUSION.—1. *Morality must have a religious basis.* Man must be taught not only what is right, but why it is right; and he must be shown that he is bound to do it. The term "duty" refers not merely to the action which is to be done, but to the obligations to do it. Take away the morality of the Bible from that with which God has connected it, and you make it powerless. Moral influence and power come only from the whole truth of God. 2. *The whole truth of God is used by the Holy Spirit as an instrument to effect moral reformations, and that truth only.* We have here another most important reason for looking for the advancement of morality from the diffusion of such truth only (*γ*). 3. *Religious truth benefits only those who make it their earnest study.* It does not operate necessarily. The Bible must be diligently read, with much prayer that its teachings may be applied to your conscience; that they may be in you a good seed sown in good ground. 4. *The duty of parents is thus made plain.* 5. *We see also the true aim and the extreme value of Sunday schools.*—*Richard Watson: Works*, vol. ix. pp. 458–471.

I. **What constitutes "stability of times?"** 1. Civil order and subjection to law. 2. A regular flow of commerce, and employment for the several orders of men. 3. Freedom from war, defensive or aggressive.

II. **What influence has the "wisdom and knowledge" of Christianity on "the stability of times?"** 1. The principles and rules of Christianity are those of practical "wisdom and knowledge," and must, if acted on, give "stability of times." Look at its instructions in relation to civil government (Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 6, 7; 1 Tim. ii. 1–3); to the domestic and social duties of life (Col. iii. 18–iv. 1; 1 Tim. vi. 1); to integrity, industry, and love of our fellow-men (Rom. xiii. 8–10; 1 Thess. iv. 2). Universal conformity to such precepts would produce universal harmony, industry, and confidence. With equal clearness it denounces oppression, insubordination, and war. Were these injunctions and prohibitions heeded, a new era of settled prosperity would begin (H. E. I. 1124–1132, 1134). 2. Christianity gives "stability of times" by the *intellectual* wisdom and knowledge it imparts. What a contrast in this respect between Christian and heathen nations! Christianity promotes intellectual strength by the grandeur of the subjects which it brings before the mind, by the freedom it enjoins in the exercise of every right, and by the rules it gives for the government of nations and the guidance of individuals. All its instructions are those of wisdom and mental strength. Moreover it enlarges the conceptions of those who receive it, by leading them to strive to promote the welfare of the whole world. 3. By its *sanctifying* influence. The real causes of peace and permanent pros-

perity are moral; and the very tendency of Christianity is to promote civil order, integrity, industry, and benevolent conduct (H. E. I. 4164–4166). 4. By leading men to that obedience to the laws of God which brings down upon them His blessing.

From all this it follows, 1. That it is the wisdom of every nation that has the knowledge of Christianity to retain and improve it, and to guard against its corruption and abuse. Whatever diminishes its purity weakens its practical influence. 2. That we should gratefully acknowledge how much we owe to God for "the wisdom and knowledge" which He has imparted to us. Let us trace our prosperity to its true cause. 3. That national ruin will be the result, if we reject "the wisdom and knowledge" God has vouchsafed to us. 4. That every one who seeks for himself the "wisdom and knowledge" of the Bible is a patriot. He adds, in his own personal religion, to the stability and wealth of the nation. 5. That true patriotism will lead us to value and support those institutions which exist for the diffusion of the Gospel in our own and other lands. — *John Johnson, M.A.: Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 156–177.

I. Wisdom and knowledge both resemble and differ from each other, and should be carefully distinguished. Many have great knowledge and no wisdom. Some have wisdom and little knowledge. Wisdom is knowledge digested and turned to account; knowledge is the food swallowed; wisdom is the food changed into chyle and blood, and sent through the system. Knowledge is often a mere chaotic mass; wisdom is that mass reduced to order. Knowledge may remain inactive in the memory and understanding; wisdom is the same turned to practice and incarnated in life. Many men possess great knowledge, but hold it in unrighteousness; hold it along with folly, indolence, and a host of other counterbalancing elements. The wise man may err like others; but his general conduct and the general course of his mind are well regulated. "Wisdom is profitable to direct." Knowledge puffeth up; but wisdom is too calm and moderate, too wide in its views, and too sober in its spirit to be often found in alliance with undue self-esteem. The man of knowledge resembles Dr. Kippis, of whom Hall said that he put so many books in his head that his brains could not move. In a mind like Burke's, the more books that were heaped upon the fiery and fertile brain the better; it turned them into flame (H. E. I. 3091, 3092, 3112–3120).

II. Knowledge and wisdom, when combined, give stability to persons, states, and churches.

1. *To individual character.* Knowledge is being increased at a wonderful ratio. The learned man of a century ago would now be thought a sciolist. But there have been many drawbacks: many incapable of grasping all kinds of knowledge are not incapable of pretending that they have grasped them; hence the desire of intermeddling with all knowledge becomes pre-eminent folly, and hence generally the preference given to men of showy attainments, glib talk, and immodest assurance, above those of solid strength and genuine insight. And it is the same, too often, in the Church. In reference to this, let the words of the wise man be pondered: "With all thy getting, get understanding." Even though our knowledge be less wide, let it be accurate. Let us ballast knowledge with common-sense; let our piety be manly; let our attitude be that of calm but constant progress. And let our motto be, "The greatest of these is charity." Such a combination of knowledge and wisdom would give, as nothing else can, stability to individual character (H. E. I. 3075–3078).

2. *In reference to states and kingdoms.* Here, too, knowledge must meet with wisdom ere genuine stability can be secured. This was manifested in the last French and German war. Indeed, the whole history of France shows the evil of knowledge being separated from wisdom. We see this

in its brilliant, but rash and dangerous science; in its literature—splendid in form, inferior in substance; in its raging love for display and thirst for war; in its popular idols—Henry IV., Mirabeau, Voltaire, and Napoleon—all men as full of ability as they were destitute of true wisdom.

3. *The Church.* The whole Bible has been taken to pieces. All the conceivable knowledge on the subject has been amassed. Now, here comes in the place for the exercise of wisdom. Let us not leap to conclusions; let us rather ask: "Where does wisdom dwell, and where is the place of understanding?" There is at present a divorce between knowledge and wisdom in spiritual matters; and seldom were manly morality and true religion in a feebler condition than in some quarters. There are noise and sound enough and to spare; but there is a lack of stability,—no progress at once in piety and intelligence (H. E. I. 3153–3155). Out of that gulf into which one-sidedness has plunged us, all-sidedness, broad charity, and wisdom can alone deliver us. Let us pray that these may abound, and introduce a period when wisdom and knowledge, walking hand in hand, shall be the stability of a better and nobler era!—*George Gilfillan: The Study and the Pulpit, New Series*, vol. iv. pp. 9–11.

These were the words of comfort by which Hezekiah was prepared to meet the invasion of the conquering Assyrians. In other times Judah fled for protection into the arms of Egypt. They thereby incurred God's displeasure, and were invariably overtaken by the calamities from which they sought refuge. Hezekiah put his trust in Jehovah, and was not disappointed.

The text contains, at the same time, a general principle, viz., *that wisdom (or practical religion) and knowledge are the best elements of the stability of any people.* As patriots let us carefully consider it.

I. Christianity promotes wisdom and knowledge.

1. *Christianity promotes wisdom.* (1.) The God whom the Bible reveals is the fit object of reverence and love. It reveals the Divine attributes in forms the most fitted to fill the soul with solemn awe and reverence. It ascribes to Him eternal and unchangeable love, and reveals that love in forms of ineffable grace and mercy. It does not efface any of the more awful attributes of Godhead, or merge them in a perverted view of the parental relation; nor does it degrade His more amiable attributes into the tenderness, or rather weakness, which loses sight of the criminal's guilt in the consideration of his misery—the world's conception of the Divine! *That* character, however, is not enough to rekindle the flame of piety in a fallen world (James ii. 19). But (2.) Christianity provides, in the great facts through which it conveys the knowledge of God, the means of reducing men to contrition and restoring them to hope. The Gospel is adapted to convert the soul. How? In its adaptation the element of hope occupies no mean place. Any scheme of regeneration must contain a provision of mercy. By its mode of opening the door of hope, it impresses sinfulness on the mind; it moves to repentance, and inspires obedience on the ground of conscious obligation to Divine grace. The tendency of the doctrine of the cross is no doubtful matter (Rom. i. 16).

2. *Christianity promotes knowledge.* It points out the only true way to the knowledge of God; but further it promotes general knowledge. (1.) Revealing God, it makes known the highest truths; and, making known the highest truths, it promotes and facilitates inquiry into every other. The uncovered heavens reflect their light on all earthly things. (2.) By the healing power which it applies to the heart and conscience, it fits the soul for vigorous and healthful action. The Christian can have no reason to dread the advances of knowledge—he may tremble for the temporary evils resulting from philosophy, falsely so called (δ).

II. By promoting wisdom and knowledge, Christianity establishes a people.

1. *It purifies and elevates society.* (1.) It is an acknowledged fact that the Gospel makes man unfit for a state of slavery. It may teach submission to the bond, but it will create a moral influence whose fire will melt his chains. (2.) The Gospel civilises the savage. It produces dissatisfaction with his abjectness, and creates the desire and imparts the means of rising in the scale of intelligence.

2. *If Christianity thus elevates, how much more will it establish!* If it imparts life, how much more will it maintain it! If it gives existence, how much more will it give it the elements of perpetuity! But what are the means of the stability of a nation? (1.) *Religion.* This is the foundation of all others. An irreligious and wicked nation has the elements of misery and dissolution within itself; a righteous nation, like a righteous individual, may be afflicted, but, as in the one case, so in the other, "all things work together for good." Knowledge has an indirect influence. Galileo could sacrifice truth and honour to escape imprisonment; the tale of Bacon's moral weaknesses is a humbling page of human history; but the diffusion of knowledge tends to correct a taste for low and sensual habits. (2.) *Virtue.* Religion produces the best morals; here the connection is direct and immediate. The Gospel provides an authoritative principle—wanting elsewhere—which responds to its moral precepts, and renders it a matter of moral necessity to give a ready and cheerful obedience. (3.) *Freedom.* The foundation of this is in the virtue which Christianity creates and promotes. If the ark of God were in danger, we might well tremble for the ark of liberty; religious degeneracy endangers the existence of freedom. (4.) *Good order.* This follows, as the natural and necessary consequence from the promotion of virtue and freedom.

CONCLUSION.—British society, with all its boasted civilisation, is only in a state of childhood; it speaks as a child and it acts as a child. We expect better days, not as the result of a natural and inherent tendency to progress and improvement, but as the result of the operation of Divine principles implanted in the midst of us, under the blessing of a favourable Providence. That we may put forth our strength to accomplish this change, we must have an adequate impression of existing evils and of our obligation to apply a remedy. Christianity is the lever by which we can raise man (Eph. v. 14).—*John Kennedy, D.D.: Weekly Christian Teacher*, vol. iii. pp. 760–764, 777–781.

(α.) What connection is there between the knowledge of mechanics and morality? What moral duty have you impressed on the conscience when you have taught a man to make a table? So with the knowledge of numbers, or of language, whether ancient or modern. In none of these sciences is there any principle that can connect itself with moral feeling.—*Watson.*

(β.) The Gospel was first preached, beyond the limits of the Jewish church, to a very refined, but to a very immoral people. Even with what they had learned from tradition, the wisest among them—I may not even except Socrates—could contemplate with perfect indifference, and even practise, the most abominable vices. The same results are found in our own day. Wherever infidelity prevails, we witness the decay and destruction of moral principle. We find, perhaps, some exceptions in Christian countries; but let us see how they are produced, and we shall find that they prove the rule. They proceed from awe of public opinion; from a feeling of shame with regard to personal honour and character. But what provides that standard whose elevated purity men thus practically acknowledge, even while they reject its source? It is this book, it is the faithful preaching of the Gospel, which so keeps up the standard of public opinion that even infidels are obliged to acknowledge its authority. Even among our peasants who have been carefully instructed in religious truth—men without a single ray of science—we find the practice of all the Christian virtues; whilst, too often, we see the brightest beams of human philosophy gilding and giving splendour to baseness and corruption.—*Watson.*

(γ.) Along with the truth of God there goes an accompanying influence. The words that are spoken to you are "spirit and life:" this is because the illuminations of the Holy Ghost go along with them. We may not overlook the fallen state of man; he is dead in trespasses and sins. The very law is weak

through the flesh; it gives direction, but it cannot give life. The Spirit must convince men of sin and righteousness; and if He be removed, the Agent is taken away by whom only our moral renovation can be effected. Now, this blessed, this mighty Spirit only works on our hearts in connection with His own revealed truth; it is not with human science that He works for the amendment of our principles and tempers.—*Watson.*

(δ.) I fear it is incontrovertible that what is denominated polite literature, the grand school in which taste acquires its laws and refined perceptions, and in which are formed, much more than under any higher, austerer discipline, the moral sentiments, is, for the far greater part, hostile to the religion of Christ; partly by introducing insensibly a certain order of opinions unconsonant, or, at least, not identical with the principles of that religion, and still more by training the feelings to a habit alien from its spirit. And in this assertion I do not refer to writers palpably irreligious, who have laboured and intended to seduce the passions into vice, or the judgment into the rejection of Divine truth, but to the general community of those elegant and ingenious authors who are read and admired by the Christian world, held essential to a liberal education, and to the progressive accomplishment of the mind in subsequent life, and studied often without an apprehension, or even a thought, of their injuring the views and temper of spirits advancing, with the New Testament for their chief instructor and guide, into another world.—*John Foster.*

God Avenging His Own Elect.

xxxiii. 7–12. *Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without, &c.*

I. A picture of desolation.

The picture has two distinct points of interest—1. *Man* (ver. 7). Desolation receives nowhere so strong and pathetic expression as in the strong cries and tears of a man. The purer and nobler the man, so much the more affecting is it to hear his despairing cry and look upon his tears. The child cannot bear to see his father weep, because his father is to him the ideal man. Eliakim's grief, on returning from the interview with Rabshakeh, would be more grievous to Hezekiah than Shebna's. Peter's repentant tears were bitter; but by the cry of the Christ, "*Eloi! lama sabacthani?*" and His tears at the grave of Lazarus, we are much more affected. 2. *Nature* (vers. 8, 9). The world is partly bright and beautiful, because noble men of God dwell in it; Nature reflects and interprets man. The Assyrian invader weighed heavily on Jewish hearts (xxxvi. 22, xxxvii. 1) and the Jewish land.

II. The redresser of wrong.

"Now will I rise, saith the Lord," &c. 1. *God rules the world in the interests of His people.* "Now will *I* rise." Democrats are fond of saying, "The Queen may reign, but she does not govern;" but the reins of government are firmly held by the great I AM. 2. *God's interposition comes at the right moment:* "*Now* will I rise." Man's extremity is often God's opportunity; because not until his case is desperate, will he cast himself unreservedly upon God. So man often retards the arrival of the right moment. Meanwhile the innocent (comparatively) suffer for the guilty, the good for the bad, the just for the unjust. If it is the teaching of Scripture that God's people are "the salt of the earth," preserving it from destruction, it is no less the doctrine of the Bible that untold sorrows are to the righteous because they dwell on the earth with the wicked. The Isaiahs and Hezekiahs of the world feel something of the weight of the world's sin. But there is always a "thus far and no farther." "*Now* will I rise, saith the Lord."

III. The desolator desolated.

Cf. Luke xviii. 8; Isa. xlii. 1. The greater wickedness is employed by God to be the scourge of the less, until its own time comes to be scattered as chaff, and destroyed as fire destroys (vers. 11, 12). To one whose "eyes are in his head," it is sad to hear the ambassador of Sennacherib saying, "The Lord said unto me, Go up against this land and destroy it." In the midst of this judgment of God—in which the righteous suffer most—meted out instrumentally by wicked hands, we do well to remember the words of Christ: "Knowest thou

not, said Pilate to Him, that I have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above."

Note that where the avenging is pictured in this passage, the two sides spoken of in the former part of it—man and nature—are summed up in the terrible destruction of the *human*. So terrible is this, that a burning world is lost sight of! The first picture of desolation is as nothing to the second; and the woe is seen to reach its intensity in this regard.—*J. Macrae Simcock.*

A Blessed Life.

xxxiii. 15–17. *He that walketh righteously, &c.*

This is a gleam of bright sunshine after a heavy storm. It describes a truly happy, holy life, such as we may all attain, and may all well desire to be ours.

1. It is *a gracious life.* This is not specially mentioned here. We have only what is outward and visible described. But this always implies an inward hidden life. When we see such a great, green, spreading, fruitful tree of righteousness as this, we may always assuredly conclude that, deep in the heart out of sight, there must be a great, strong, living Lebanon-root of faith and love (Tit. ii. 12). This is the secret or source of all that follows (H. E. I. 2840, 2841, 4092–4095).

2. It is *an upright life.* "He that walketh righteously." A man's "walk" is his whole conduct in all the positions and relations in which he stands. *All* that this man does is conformed to the law of God and the example of Christ (Luke i. 6). "He speaketh uprightly." Most important (Jas. iii. 2, i. 26; P. D. 3384, 3394). "He despiseth the gain of oppressions." He will not take advantage of his neighbour's distress; will not be hard upon him when his back is at the wall; will not abuse his ignorance or simplicity by charging more than a commodity is worth. "He shaketh his hands from holding of bribes." He abhors such temptations. Judas, from an awakened conscience, horror-struck at what he had done, cast the blood-money which he had received on the ground; but this man, from a clear, enlightened conscience, at peace with God, casts from him all that would offend the Lord. "He stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood." There is a killing of character by slander and insinuation, but he will have none of it (P. D. 3108). "He shutteth his eyes from seeing evil." He is like God; he *cannot* look upon sin. He hates it; can find no amusement in it; knows its tendency and its fearful end. Through the unguarded eye comes ruin (Josh. vii. 21; 2 Sam. xi. 2). Pictures and descriptions of evil often destroy. Have we not here a beautiful, noble character? and yet this is what believing in Christ and walking in His footsteps will always produce. But there must be the root, Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, else the outward life, however fair and seemly, will be only a make-believe, a wretched caricature, that will break down in the time of trial, and be rejected in the day of the Lord.

3. It is *a heavenly life.* "He shall dwell on high." His heart is set on things above (Eph. ii. 5, 6; Col. iii. 1–3; Phil. iii. 20). He has already come to Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem: he really dwells on high (H. E. I. 2766–2779).

4. It is *a safe life.* His real all is above, beyond the reach of chance and change. He is still beset by foes, but he is safe. "His place of defence is the munitions of rocks" (Ps. xviii. 2, 3, &c.)

5. It is *a well-supplied life.* "His bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure" (Ps. xxxiv. 10). But man needs more than bread to eat and raiment to put on; like the Master,

the servant has meat to eat of which the world knows not (Ps. iv. 6, 7, liii. 5, 6). He has growing light, increasing life, fuller assurance, and fresh Ebenezers from day to day.

6. It is *a hopeful life.* "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." There is a blessed beginning of the fulfilment of this promise now (John xiv. 21–23; H. E. I. 974, 975). "They shall behold the land that is very far off." To Christ's friends things to come are revealed by the Holy Ghost. They see Jesus, already crowned with glory and honour, and fairer than the sons of men. Like the patriarchs, they see the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Like Moses, they gaze the landscape over and gird their loins; they take courage and press on (H. E. I. 2771–2779).

Such a life leads to a blessed death. The two go together. We cannot have the one without the other. Balaam thought he could, but it was in vain. Such a life prepares for a happy meeting with the Lord, if He should come while we are still present on the earth (Matt. xxiv. 46).—*John Milne: Gatherings from a Ministry,* pp. 325–331.

The Blessedness of the Servant of God.

xxxiii. 16. *He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.*

This is part of the answer to the question proposed in ver. 14. The overthrow of Asshur has been predicted; but the judgment of Asshur is a lesson for Israel as well as for the heathens. For the sinners in Jerusalem, there is no abiding in the presence of the Almighty. They must repent. "God is a consuming fire." His furnace was in Jerusalem. Therefore they inquire, "Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

The prophet answers their question in ver. 15. It is the description of a God-fearing man from the Old Testament point of view. Because of the predominating religion of his heart, he avoids the sins of his times. A Christian, in like manner, renounces sin, and, so far as the world's principles and practices are sinful, sets himself against the world. Instead of being afraid of the Divine anger, as sinners and hypocrites are, he dwells in blessed security, with God for his Friend (ver. 16). Three things distinguish him from the unbelieving world: elevation, provision, and security.

I. Elevation. "He shall dwell on high." Leaving out of view the temporal advantages that sometimes accrue from true religion as being only incidental, let us look at the elevation it secures with regard to—1. *Thought.* Christianity directs the mind to the most elevated themes, fosters the habit of thought upon them, and through them refines and elevates the mind itself. When a man is converted he generally becomes interested in topics beyond the requirements of his daily life. Mind is awakened. Mental activity is required. In any number of uneducated men, some Christians and some not, the Christian section will probably be the more intelligent and thoughtful. If an educated man is converted, the influence is equally marked. His previous attainments remain, and his mind receives a new impetus from the world of spiritual thought now discovered. He thinks of God, Christ, redemption, holy influences on men from on high, the invisible, heaven, eternity. The mind cannot fail to be uplifted by contact with such themes as these. 2. *Character.* Doubtless much excellence exists among men apart from personal religion. The civil, social, and commercial virtues are often exemplified by men who make no pretension to religion. Even in these respects the best man without it would be better with it. But we must rise higher. Men never rise above their

ideal. The ideal of a man without religion does not rise above his obligations to man; but the ideal of a man in Christ is to be like Christ. It comprehends all dispositions, sympathies, duties that either look Godward or manward. It is Divine perfection. It is not yet realised; but the entertaining and striving towards it will lift him to a loftier moral altitude than if his ideal were lower; when all allowance has been made for human imperfection, it remains true that the Christian is "the highest style of man." 3. *Relationship.* Believers are closely connected with Christ, their Saviour, their Head, their Elder Brother. They are "united to Him," "in Him." Terms are employed that give the idea, not, indeed, of personal identity, but of such close relationship that whatever concerns Him concerns them, and whatever glorification He attains they are to share. Through Him they are "the children of God," and heirs of the celestial inheritance. Is it possible for relationship to be loftier? 4. *Companionship.* The man is known by his chosen associates. The young man that keeps low company makes it plain that his tastes are low. Fine natures can only enjoy congenial society. When a man becomes a Christian, he seeks the society of Christians. And not only are his human companionships superior to those he previously courted, he enjoys a Divine companionship which is the supremest dignity. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Is it not dwelling "on high" to have free access at all times to the King of kings? 5. *Influence.* God has made us kings of men. The time is coming when the principles we hold shall, by our means, pervade the mass of humanity. Already, in a thousand quiet ways, in families, in schools, in churches, in populations, the influence of individual Christian men is felt to be good and gracious as far as it extends. Christian fathers and mothers will live in the recollection of their children and their children's children when the memory of the wicked shall rot (H. E. I. 1089–1095). 6. *Destiny.* He is to be crowned and enthroned in the abiding glory. "He shall dwell on high" (H. E. I. 1073–1076, 1106, 1112–1119).

II. PROVISION. "Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure." His wants shall be supplied in his elevation. All necessary temporal supplies and spiritual provision. Christ the bread of life.

III. SECURITY. "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." There is an enemy who would gladly attack and overcome him; but he has retired to a place of perfect safety. Inaccessible to the adversary. Will endeavour to dislodge you by various means; such as: 1. *Temptation*, which assumes many forms. Grows out of everything. Keep before you the lofty ideal; constant effort, watchfulness, government of thought and desires, Divine aid. 2. *Trouble.* It becomes temptation. It tries faith. Cry to God. 3. *Death.* It is the last enemy. Christ, our defence, will triumph.

What a privilege to be a Christian! For what would you exchange it? Not the world's sins, pleasures, possessions.—*J. Rawlinson.*

THE PROSPECT OF THE GODLY.

xxxiii. 17. *Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.*

The literal application of this prophecy is generally supposed to have reference to the deliverance of the Jews from the Assyrian army. They would then have the joy of seeing Hezekiah in his goodly apparel, and, freed from the presence of the invader, would be left at liberty to enjoy their own pleasant and goodly land. The deliverance was accomplished (2 Chron. xxxii. 21). But there is another application of the text—to the beatific

vision of the King of kings in the heavenly land. Let us then consider—

I. THE GLORIOUS PROSPECT BEFORE THE CHILDREN OF GOD. "Thine eyes," &c. The prospect respects—**1.** *The vision of Christ.* Christ is King. Of Him Melchisedec, David, and Solomon were types (Ps. ii. 6, &c.; John xviii. 36; Heb. ii. 9; Rev. i. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 10). Patriarchs and prophets saw Him in human form. The Jews saw Him in His humiliation, as "a man of sorrows," &c. The apostles and disciples saw Him in His risen glory. John saw Him in the vision of Patmos (Rev. i. 13, &c.) Hereafter all His people shall see Him "in His beauty," in all His regal splendour and magnificence. They shall see Him clearly, fully, eternally. 2. *The vision of heaven.* "The land," &c. Of heaven Canaan was a type. It was a land of beauty and abundance; of freedom, after the slavery of Egypt; of triumph, after warfare; of rest, after the toils of the desert. Its crowning distinction was the Temple, which God filled with His presence and glory. But heaven is all temple.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF ITS REALISATION. "Thine eyes *shall*," &c. 1. *This was contemplated by Christ in our redemption.* He designed our emancipation from the dominion of sin, our deliverance from this present evil world, and also our elevation to His glorious kingdom (Heb. ii. 10; John xvii. 24). 2. *This is repeatedly the subject of the Divine promises* (Luke xxii. 29, xii. 32; John xiv. 2, 3, &c.) 3. *To this tends the work of grace in all its influences on the soul.* See what our calling is (1 Pet. v. 10); to what we are begotten (1 Pet. i. 3, 4); why we are sanctified (Rev. iii. 4). 4. *A goodly number are now enjoying the fulfilment of these promises* (Rev. vii. 9, 14). 5. *The glory and joy of Christ would not be complete without the eternal salvation of His people* (Isa. liii. 11).

III. THE PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR ITS ENJOYMENT. Nothing is necessary in the way of merit, price, or self-righteousness. But if we would see the King, *we must make Him the object of our believing, affectionate regard now.* 2. If we would see "the land," &c., *we must seek and labour for its attainment* (Heb. xi. 16, iv. 10). — *Jabez Burns, D.D.: Pulpit Cyclopædia*, vol. ii. pp. 154–157).

THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

xxxiii. 17. *Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.*

There is a difference between the worthiness and the beauty of a character. A poetic beauty adorns the worth of Christ's character.

WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF THE SUPREMELY BEAUTIFUL CHARACTER OF CHRIST?

I Sensibility. This is a word to be preferred to sensitiveness, for it includes sensitiveness; it has the passive quality of sensitiveness with activity of soul in addition exercised upon the impressions received. The more perfect the manhood, the more perfect is this sensibility. The total absence of it is the essence of vulgarity. The presence of it in its several degrees endows its possessor, according to the proportion of it, with what Chaucer meant by "gentilness." (1.) It does not seem wrong to say that there was in Christ the *sensibility to natural beauty.* He also, like us, wished and sought that Nature should send "its own deep quiet to restore His heart." We find His common teaching employed about the vineyard and the wandering sheep, the whitening corn and the living well, the summer rain and the wintry flood and storm. (2.) Still higher in Him was an intense *sensibility to human feeling.* He saw Nathaniel coming to Him, and in a moment frankly granted the meed of praise (John i. 47); when the malefactor on the cross appealed to Him, Christ saw at once that the fountain of a noble life had begun to flow (Luke xxxiii. 43). It was the

same with bodies of men as with men; He wove into one instrument of work the various characters of the Apostles; day by day He held together vast multitudes by feeling their hearts within His own; He shamed and confuted His enemies by an instinct of their objections and their whispers; men, women, and children ran to Him, as a child to its mother.

How did the sensibility of Christ become active? — 1. *As sympathy with Nature.* There are many who never employ either intellect or imagination on the impressions which they receive. Remaining passive, they only permit the tide of the world's beauty to flow in and out of their mind; they do nothing with it. In Wordsworth, each feeling took form as a poem. As Christ walked silently along, He lifted up His eyes and saw the fields whitening already to harvest; and immediately He seized on the impression and expressed it in words. It marks a beautiful character to be so rapidly and delicately impressed; but the beauty becomes vital beauty when, through sympathy with and love of what is felt, one becomes himself creative of new thought. Sometimes such sympathy is shown *through the imagination,* as when Christ, seeing the cornfield by the shore of the lake while He was teaching, looked on the whole career of the field, and combined impressions taken up by the imagination into the Parable of the Sower. Sensibility becoming sympathy is *discriminating.* Praise without distinctiveness is wearisome. We find perfect discrimination in the illustrations Christ drew from Nature. How exquisite the passage beginning, "Consider the lilies!" This distinctiveness appears still more in the choice of places for certain moods of mind,—the temptation in the wilderness, the hill-side for prayer. In all this, Christ recognises natural religion as His own, and bids us believe in its beauty, and add it to the spiritual. 2. *As sympathy with human feeling.* Examples of this are numerous. His tenderness stayed Him on the wayside to satisfy the mother's heart and to bless the children; touched by the widow's weeping, He gave her back her son. "Jesus wept" even at the moment when He was about to give back the lost, because those He loved were weeping. How discriminating the sympathy which gave to Martha and Mary their several meed of praise! How unspeakably beautiful the words, "Woman, behold thy son!" Friend, "behold thy mother!"

This, then, is loveliness of character.

Remember, we have no right to boast of our sensibility to the feelings of others; nay, it is hateful in us till we lift it into the beauty of sympathising action. Remember, too, its wise discrimination. Christ, while feeling with all the world, sanctified distinctiveness in friendship and love.

II. Simplicity. Milton tells us that poetry must be "simple." The beautiful character must also possess this quality. But by simplicity is not meant here the simplicity of Christ's teaching. What is meant is the quality in His character which corresponds to that which we call simplicity in poetry; and that which is simplicity in art is *purity* in a perfect character. The beauty of Christ's purity was first in this, that those who saw it saw in it the glory of moral victory. His purity was not the beauty of innocence in a child; it was purity which had been subject to the storm, which had known evil and overcome it. And from this purity, so tried and victorious, arose two other elements of moral beauty—*perfect justice* and *perfect mercy.* Innocence cannot be just, nor is the untempted saint fit to judge; but Christ is able to be just and yet merciful, because He is entirely pure.

III. Passion, defined as the power of intense feeling capable of perfect expression. Milton tells us that poetry must be "passionate." We may transfer it directly to character as an element of beauty. It was intense feeling of the weakness and sin of man, and intense joy in His Father's power to redeem, that produced the story of the "Prodigal Son." "Come unto

Me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How that goes home! How deep the passion which generalised that want into a single sentence! It is a beauty of character, whether seen in words or action, which passes into and assumes the diadem of sublimity. Christ's words to the Pharisees have all the marks of indignation and none of the marks of anger. Passion and energy limited by temperance imply *repose of character.* Activity in repose, calm in the heart of passion, these things are of the essence of beauty. And in Him in whom we have found the King in His beauty, this peacefulness was profound. This is the final touch of beauty, which gathers into itself and harmonises all the others, and hence no words are so beautiful as those in which Christ bestows it as His dying legacy on men, "Peace I leave with you," and repeats it as His resurrection gift, "Peace be unto you." All moral and spiritual loveliness lies in knowing what He meant when He said, "Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest."—*Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.: Christ in Modern Life* (*Three Sermons*, pp. 89–131).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

xxxiii. 20. *Look upon Zion, &c.*

It is probable that when this prophecy was delivered the city of Jerusalem was threatened with an immediate siege; but Jehovah engages to defend it from the attacks of its enemies, the Assyrians, and to render it at once quiet and secure. But yet the text appears to have a direct reference to the privileges and stability of the Gospel Church, for Jerusalem, after this period, was never long preserved from hostile invasions; therefore our attention is turned from it to that glorious city against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. (See pp. 228, 229.)

I. The Church of Christ is "the city of our solemnities." Jerusalem was thus described because of the solemn assemblies that were there held, the solemn feasts that were there celebrated, and the solemn sacrifices which were there offered. And it is in the Church that individual believers come together, and unite in the enjoyment of divine grace, and in the presentation of "sacrifices" with which "God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 15, 16) (α.)

II. The Church of Christ is "a quiet habitation" (β.) All genuine believers dwell in it, and peace is at once the bequest of Christ (John xiv. 27) and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22).

III. The Church of Christ is "a tabernacle that shall not be taken down." "A tabernacle" in contrast with the superior glories of the New Jerusalem in heaven. A tabernacle, because it may often change its place, as in fact it has already done. But it shall never be "taken down" in the sense of being destroyed (H. E. I. 1246–1251).

IV. Such a contemplation of Zion as our text calls for will awaken—1. In *angels* complacency and delight; 2. In *sinners* astonishment at its wondrous preservation, in spite of all their efforts to destroy it, and desire to share in its privileges; and 3. In *Christians* wonder, love, and praise. — *Thomas Spencer: Twenty-one Sermons*, pp. 196–206.

(α.) As the earth's loftiest peaks rise not in their snows on some isolated hill that stands like a lonely pyramid on a level plain, but where the mountains, as in the Alps, or Andes, or Himalayan range, are grouped and massed together, so the saint's most heavenly happiness is not attained in solitude, nor even amid domestic scenes, but where religious life exists in its social character.—*Guthrie.*

(β) See THE PEACEABLE HABITATION, chap. xxxii. 18, page 368.

Enriching Rivers.

xxxiii. 21. *But there the glorious Lord shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.*

The prophet here speaks for the encouragement of God's Church; and he appears to overstep the boundaries of time, and gives a glimpse of the blessedness and safety of the Church triumphant. In our interpretation let us take a large view, and refer, as the course of thought may require, both to the Church militant and the Church triumphant. And let it be deeply impressed on the mind that the promises of God can be realised only by those who belong to the true Israel.

I. The attractive title proclaimed. "The glorious Lord." God is glorious in His own perfections, and as the source of all the glory and beauty in this and every other world. Our knowledge of God is gathered from His manifestations in *nature* and *revelation*. How resplendent in glory is the Being thus revealed to us! Especially we may say, with immediate reference to our subject, He is glorious in the vastness of His resources. In the summer the streams of the Holy Land were either entirely dried up, and converted into hot lanes of glaring sands, or reduced to narrow streamlets. But no summer's heat can dry up the broad streams of Divine love and mercy. God is glorious in the abundant nature of His supplies, and in His willingness to make ample provision for His Church.

II. The blessed comparison instituted. "The glorious Lord shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams." That is, all that such rivers and streams are to a country, God would be to His people. 1. *Broad rivers and streams give beauty to the landscape.* All beauty is from God, and is a revelation of Him; but especially is it true that He is the source of all the moral beauty of His people. 2. *Broad rivers give fertility and prosperity.* In such a highly cultivated country as England, where great droughts are unknown, we have no opportunity of properly observing the fertilising influence of a broad river. But remember what the Nile is to Egypt. So does God enrich and fertilise the soul, causing it to bring forth "the fruits of righteousness." 3. *Broad rivers afford protection.* Babylon had its Euphrates, which was a source of power. "Hundred-gated Thebes," celebrated by Homer, also had its river. Almost all great modern cities are built on the banks of rivers. But Jerusalem had no great river running through it. In fact, it was badly supplied with water. Large cisterns were constructed in which to catch and preserve the rain that came down plentifully in its season. The prophet makes use of this fact for the encouragement of the Church. The glorious Lord will be unto it as broad rivers and streams. He is the sure defence of His people

III. The distinctive mark of Divine blessings here symbolised. "Wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." Earthly blessings have attendant evils; heavenly blessings alone are pure and perfect. Rivers may prove a source of weakness as well as of strength to a nation (*a*). But along the broad rivers of Divine blessing no foe shall advance to assail God's people. The presence of God at once confers blessings and averts evils.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

(*a*.) Rivers are highly important as the outlets and inlets of commercial enterprise; but the merchant ship, though richly laden, may carry the seeds of physical and moral disease, and inflict untold injury. Rivers give security to the cities built on their banks, but they may also prove the means of destruction. Cyrus made use of the Euphrates when besieging Babylon, and thus captured the city. The strength of Babylon became its weakness. The same river that bears on its tidal waves

the merchant ship laden with the precious products of distant lands may also bring the war-ship laden with the instruments of destruction and death. But the city of our solemnities is secure. No mischief can come to us along the broad river of Almighty grace. —*Burrows.*

[See also outlines, *Rivers of Waters*, xxx. 25, 26, and *Rivers of Water in a Dry Place*, xxxii. 2.]

A Controlling Fact.

xxxiii. 22. *The Lord is our Judge.*

An immense step has been taken in the moral development of any one who has been led to say this with the understanding, with a vivid perception of the truth of this declaration.

I. It is a fact that God is our Judge. The Bible teaches us—1. That God is continually present with us, intimately acquainted with our real characters, the witness of all our actions, words, thoughts (Prov. v. 21, xv. 3; Job xxxi. 4; Ps. xi. 4, cxxxi. 1–7). Thus He is qualified for being in an eminent sense our judge. 2. That the God who is perfectly acquainted with all our dispositions and actions cannot behold any one of them with indifference. He observes them on purpose to estimate their real nature; He necessarily approves or disapproves of them. It is this that renders his knowledge of them important. He not only is pure from all moral evil, but He holds it in abomination; He not only is perfect in all moral goodness, but He loves goodness (Hab. i. 12, 13; Jer. ix. 24; Ps. v. 4–6, xi. 7, xxxvii. 23). 3. That this omniscient and holy God is our proper and righteous Governor. This brings His approbation and disapprobation home to us; it implies that they will be attended with the weightiest consequences. All that men can do often is merely to esteem or to blame us. If they have authority over us, or are able to promote or obstruct our interest, their opinion of our character assumes a new importance (Prov. xix. 12). Honour or dishonour in the eye of the All-perfect Being is for its own sake deeply affecting to every ingenuous mind; but to the soul of every man not dead to thought it must, on account of its inevitable and infinite consequences, appear of infinite importance. God is the Sovereign and the moral Governor of mankind, and His approbation will be followed by a great reward, His disapprobation by dreadful punishment (Ps. xlvii. 2, 8; Jer. xvii. 10; Eccl. iii. 17, xii. 14). Our conscience testifies that this should be the case. And our redemption by Jesus Christ, which displays the marvellous grace and compassion of God, displays at the same time, in the most striking manner, the inviolable sanctity of His government of mankind. While it provides for the pardon of sin, the blood of Christ, shed for the expiation of sin, testifies how odious, how deserving of punishment it is in the sight of God. While it secures mercy to the penitent, it seals the condemnation and the misery of every sinner.

II. A recognition of the fact that God is our Judge will necessarily exert a controlling influence upon us. We are greatly influenced by the judgment passed upon our character and conduct by our fellow-men, especially if they are discerning and virtuous, and still more if their good or bad opinion is likely to be of advantage or disadvantage to us. What, then, must be the effect upon any man who really wakes up to the fact that we are under the scrutiny of One who alone can justly estimate our character, and whose estimation of it is of infinite importance to us! To be approved and beloved, or to be disapproved and hated by the Ruler of the universe! It is in one or these conditions that each of us stands to-day. Disapprobation from God is the extremity of disgrace and misery; approbation from Him is the summit of honour and happiness: the former is the natural object of fear, sorrow, and shame, exciting to circumspect

avoidance of it; the latter of ardent desire, elevating hope, and rapturous joy, conspiring to animate us in eager pursuit of it.

1. The unpardoned man cannot remember that "the Lord is our Judge" without *fear*. Thoughts of His nearness, His omniscience, His omnipotence, and His hatred of sin fill him with alarm. Along with this fear there springs up within him *sorrow*. The sinner who has become conscious of the discriminating eye of perfect sanctity marking all his paths, mourns for his sins and is troubled. His spirit is broken, his heart is contrite. He sorrows to repentance (2 Cor. vii. 9). To the sorrow is added *shame*. Whatever brings a stain upon our character in the estimation of our fellow-men naturally produces shame and humiliation. To be detected in what is base confounds most men, even though no further inconvenience is apprehended. To be lost to shame is the last sign of degeneracy; but to deserve blame from God is the deepest ignominy; it must cover with confusion every man who has any sense of God (Dan. ix. 8; Luke xviii. 13).

2. The fear, sorrow, and humiliation which arise in sinful men immediately they remember the holy government which God exercises over them continually, influence those also who are conscious that for Christ's sake He has forgiven them. They cause them to proceed through life with unremitted caution; to exercise steady care in avoiding every transgression and every omission displeasing to God. They constrain them to walk humbly with Him, and produce in them that modesty, diffidence, lowliness, and sober-mindedness which adorn their character. But these are not the only results of their constant remembrance that "the Lord is our Judge." (1.) Recognising that His approbation is the sublimest honour, they are inspired with an ardent desire to secure it. That desire gives a direction to their whole conduct (Ps. iv. 6; Col. i. 10; 2 Cor. v. 9). (2.) Conscious through Christ, they are the happy objects of God's favour, the hope of its continuance throughout eternity produces within them a triumphant joy (Rom. viii. 16, 17; Prov. x. 28). The all-penetrating eye of God, so terrible to the sinner, is become to the man who feels himself approved in His sight the encouraging, the exhilarating eye of his Father and Friend. This renders duty delightful, comforts in sorrow, takes away all fear in death.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.—1. A remembrance that "the Lord is our Judge" will deliver us from bondage to the opinions of our fellow-men. While naturally desirous of their approval, every corrupt fashion presuming to authorise what God disapproves or to explode what He approves will be counted but the silly caprice of fools. If every sensible man prefers the esteem of a few able judges to the applauses of an ignorant multitude, he must be as destitute of good sense as of religion who can hesitate in preferring honour from God to the good opinion of the whole universe. 2. All the present pleasures and advantages which sin can offer will be unable to seduce the man who preserves a lively sense of the Heavenly Judge, for they bear no proportion either to the happiness which accompanies His approbation, or to the misery which arises from His wrath (Matt. xvi. 26, 27). All the losses, troubles, and perils to which virtue can expose him will not have power to terrify him from the love and practice of it (Rom. viii. 18). Conscious that he is observed by God, animated by the sense of his acting his part before so august a Presence, he will exert all the powers of his soul to act it well. In the exertion he will feel a noble expansion of heart, and triumph in the hope of being approved and rewarded, and his hope shall not be disappointed, for its largest promises shall be surpassed by the greatness of his reward.—*Alexander Gerard, D.D.: Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 239–274.

THE ATONEMENT; OR, SALVATION CONSISTENT WITH THE REGAL AND JUDICIAL CHARACTER OF GOD (*a*).

xxxiii. 22. *For the Lord is our Judge; the Lord is our Lawgiver, &c.*

There are here two propositions, the one affirming that Jehovah sustains a certain relationship to us, the other declaring that in that relationship, and therefore in a manner perfectly consistent with it, He will save us. The same thing substantially is repeatedly asserted in the Scriptures. The very prophet in whose writings these words occur elsewhere speaks thus in God's name: "There is no God else beside me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside" (xlv. 21); "I bring near my righteousness, my salvation shall not tarry" (xlvi. 13); "My righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth" (li. 5). All this has been translated into New Testament language in that remarkable utterance of Paul's, "Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 25, 26).

Let us endeavour to unfold the harmony of salvation with the law, the justice, and the royalty of God.

I. **Let us look at the relationship indicated by the three terms Judge, Lawgiver, and King.** We say relationship, for although the words are three, the thing is substantially one, each term giving us only a modification of the same idea. The judge is the king on the bench, the lawgiver is the king writing the statute-book, and the king is the judge and lawgiver on the throne of government. The three things so run into each other that it is difficult to keep them distinct, each of the three terms brings before us one distinct phasis of the governmental relationship which God sustains towards us. The judge is set to see that the guilty shall not escape, and that the innocent shall not be punished; the lawgiver has to secure that the majesty of the law is upheld, and its authority recognised; and the king has to take care that the best interests of his subjects as a whole are not interfered with but advanced. Now it is here affirmed that Jehovah stands to us in this threefold relation, and that as a judge He saves us criminals, as a lawgiver He forgives us law-breakers, as a king He pardons us rebels.

We are not denying that God is willing and anxious to show Himself as a *father*, even to sinners. Our affirmation is, that *now*, when man has sinned, if God is to be to him precisely as he was before, if the liberty of God's son is to be enjoyed by him, then some means must be taken to secure that in all this no dishonour shall be put upon the law of God, no blot be made upon His judicial character, and no peril result to His throne or to the interests of His holy subjects.

II. **The means by which God the Judge, Lawgiver, and King saves man.** If we take the Scriptures for our guide, the answer will not be difficult to discover, for we are there uniformly taught that God seeks to save us through a substitute. At first this principle was revealed through animal sacrifices, then through the more definite offerings of the Mosaic institute, and then through the still more definite teachings of the inspired prophets. The high priest laid his hand upon the head of his victim, confessed over it all his iniquities and all the sins of all the people, and it was to bear their iniquity. But in the remarkable oracle contained in Isaiah liii. the very same phraseology is used in reference to the expected Messiah; for we are there told that God "hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," that "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," and that "He shall bear our iniquities." To this corresponds the language of the New Testament;

for when John the Baptist pointed out the Messiah, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh (beareth) away the sins of the world;" and Jesus Himself declared that "the Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many," and that "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." And in perfect harmony with all this are the utterances of the Apostles. It seems perfectly clear that the principle of substitution is the very thread round which all the other declarations of the Scripture crystallise. The Bible, from its beginning to its close, is "dipped in blood;" the atoning death of Christ is the foundation on which its whole system rests, and if that be rejected, the whole book must go with it as a dead and worthless thing.

III. Is this arrangement in harmony with the regal and judicial character of God? Gathering up the scattered statements of the Word of God into one systematic treatment of this subject, it seems clear that the following things need to be secured in order that substitution may harmonise with and subserve the ends of justice:—1. *That the substitute shall be himself free from all taint of sin, and be a voluntary victim.* Christ was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" as He was God-Man, and did not need to put Himself under the law except He had chosen to be the sinner's friend. He is thus qualified to be our substitute. And there was no compulsion. "Lo, I come! I delight to do Thy will, O my God." 2. *That the sacrifice he offers be of such value as to preserve the majesty of the law, and cover the case of those for whom it was designed.* The sacrifice offered must be something which the person making it can call his own property; and it must be something which is in itself adequate to the end contemplated. This is precisely what we have in the case of Christ. He could say His life was His own, for He was God as well as man. Again, it was such a sacrifice as met the case, for it was offered in the person of a Divine Man. As God-man, He infinitely transcends all other men, and therefore, when standing as a substitute, His personal dignity and worth give infinite value to His substitution. 3. *That the persons set free thereby should be so changed in character that their after conduct shall not in any way interfere with or interrupt the happiness of God's other holy children and subjects.* This is secured in connection with Christ's work; for when, by the eye of faith, the love of Jesus is seen as manifested on the cross, its power is such that it constrains the sinner to live to Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. The criminal who is pardoned through faith in the substitution of Christ is also reformed, and no detriment results from his deliverance to the other citizens of Jehovah's empire. 4. *That the substitute himself have such compensation given him, that in the end he shall not lose, but rather gain, through the sacrifice he has made.* Even although a substitute should willingly offer himself, it would be injustice to allow him to suffer if no adequate return could be made for it. Christ received as the reward of His sufferings that which is by Himself admitted and declared to be a thoroughly satisfactory recompense for the sacrifice he made. As He sees of the travail of His soul, He is satisfied. 5. *That the substitute be accepted by both parties.* That He is accepted by God is evident from the resurrection of Christ from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and He becomes accepted by the sinner when he believes in Jesus. Christ is not my substitute until I accept Him as such.

Two remarks in conclusion:—1. It follows that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour. His work is such that any sinner choosing to avail himself of it may be saved through it. 2. It also follows that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour; for if all these requirements needed to be satisfied, who is there that can meet them but Himself?—*W. M. Taylor, D.D.: Life Truths*, pp. 1–20.

(a) See H. E. I., 374–399.

THE DISABLED SHIP.

(A Sermon to Seamen.)

xxxiii. 23. *Thy tacklings are loosed, &c.*

Seas, rivers, and ships have for ages afforded the world the mainstay of commerce. Not only so; the imagery of many of our best books would have been very much the poorer had not visions and dreams of the sea been present to the writers. Isaiah makes good use of these. In ver. 21 he says, "The glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams," &c. Jerusalem was badly off, compared with Babylon and other cities, in that it had neither sea nor river, but only a small rivulet. Large and deep rivers near great towns have their advantages and disadvantages in time of war. The prophet here says that God would be to Jerusalem a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein no ship of war should be allowed to approach to injure His people. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in seas or war-ships (ver. 22).

Jerusalem, at this time, was in danger from a great power, and in the text that power, Assyria, is compared to a ship whose "tacklings are loosed," &c. A sad plight surely for a ship to be in! But not only great powers like Assyria are, in reality, in a bad way, as abettors of wickedness, but individuals also, like the disabled vessel spoken of by the prophet; for, 1. *A wicked man is like a ship whose tacklings are loosed.* The tackle of a ship is of immense service in many ways; but a ship whose tackle has got loosed from her masts is not fit for a voyage. No seaman would dream of sailing in such a ship. Every rope must be in its right place and securely fixed. But how many men are out on the voyage of life, with the gear of mind and heart all loose! In fine weather even, they make no real headway; in storms they are in peril of being cast away. They are at the mercy of every wind that blows; for, 2. *A wicked man is like a ship whose masts will not stand upright.* The tackle of a ship is of service in strengthening its masts. But men are out voyaging on the sea of life: they would fain stand upright, but they cannot; for their thoughts and feelings are not made use of to sustain them in an upright life; they sway under the blast; the crash of ruin is always impending. 3. *A wicked man is like a ship without sails.* On a mast, unstrengthened by good tackle, it is worse than useless to attempt to spread a sail. But without sails to catch the heaven-sent breezes, how shall the distant haven be reached? Even men of some moral ballast are at best like poor toilers at the oars. The port is a long way off, and they need sails—wings filled with spiritual energies—to carry them onward over miles of sea day by day. 4. *A wicked man is like a dismantled ship which plunderers attack.* "Then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey." How poor sailors are plundered by the weakest of mankind and womankind!

CONCLUSION.—Sin, iniquity, that is, *in-equity*, is at the root of the godless man's loose thoughts and passions, tottering steps and wingless spirit. The ship wants a thorough overhauling; nay, it wants remaking (John iii. 3).

We should be homeward-bound for the kingdom of God; but it is vain to dream of reaching port as an unseaworthy vessel.—*J. Macrae Simcock*

NO SICKNESS THERE.

xxxiii. 24. *And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.*

In a besieged city, from watching, anxiety, and scarcity of food, there is usually considerable sickness. When an epidemic disease is prevalent, sick-

ness becomes the general experience. There is in any large population always a considerable amount of sickness, more or less serious. Nor is it confined to the city. In the country it is much the same. At the best it is only somewhat less. Medical men are everywhere required. Sanitary arrangements, temperate habits, and medical skill may diminish the extent and alleviate the severity of sickness, but they cannot uproot it. When, therefore, we read of a city in which there shall be no sickness, our thoughts turn from earth to heaven. The text is a beautifully poetic representation of the termination of the conscious weakness that rested on Jerusalem while the Assyrian army lay before it. But there is a sense in which the words may be literally understood. We believe in "the holy city, the new Jerusalem." Let us meditate on that new condition of our life.

I. Sickness is weakness. We give the name to all states of the body other than sound and perfect health. How numerous! Our condition here is one of constant liability to it. At every period of life we are exposed to it. It may be borne to us by the air we breathe; taken with the food we eat and the water we drink; received by contact with our fellows; lurk secretly in some part of our body unsuspected; develop itself from the slight cold, the result of carelessness, or in spite of the utmost thoughtfulness; it may attack the youth as well as the old man, those who boast the fulness of their strength as well as those who know themselves to be less firmly built. But it always supposes weakness. Under the name of weakness it holds its victim with a firm grasp. While he persuades himself that he has conquered, it secretly spreads through every vein, and eventually lays him prostrate. The strongest man becomes powerless when sickness holds him in its grasp. As he is too weak to throw off the weakness, he is too weak to perform the tasks which at other times he performs with perfect ease. The student, the mechanic, the merchant. Visit some sick-bed and your confidence of perpetual strength will depart. Sickness is humiliating because it is weakening. It is often attended with pain. Pain increases weakness. In the grasp of pain the sufferer may be held for days, with no power of resistance, no prospect of relief.

Have you not sometimes thought what a contrast it would be if you could be entirely free from sickness and from liability to it? We may indulge the thought. That will be the condition of the resurrection body in the celestial city. It will be fashioned like to the body of Christ's glory (1 Cor. xv. 42–44). As Christ on the cross endured the last sickness and pain He was ever to know, so shall all His followers rise, as He did, to a life from which sickness and pain are for ever excluded. Are you one with Him? Then in pain, weariness, languor, sickness, let all impatience be subdued as you remember that it is only a little longer. "Neither shall there be any more pain."

II. Sickness is sorrow. Sorrow because of lost time and business, fear that the end of life is near, the leaving behind not only all pleasant earthly things and persons, but especially those dependent on the patient's life, to whom his loss may be ruin. Not to the patient only is it a time of sorrow. Enter the house. All is gloom. Rooms darkened. The family tread softly and speak under their breath, as if every sound would not only disturb the sufferer, but be out of harmony with their own feelings. It is the little one that has come home sick from school (2 Kings iv. 19). His mother takes him on her knee. Soon she perceives the signs of one of the sicknesses that are the terror of childhood. Medical aid is procured. The sickness deepens. Every one watches with aching heart, for the child is a universal favourite. And if he is taken, oh, what distress! Or it is the young man who has grown to maturity. He is active in business. His father, under the burden of ad-

vancing years, is gradually devolving responsibility on him, that he may himself enjoy a few years' rest after a life of hard and anxious work. But sickness comes. It passes by those you would expect it to strike. It singles out the young and strong. Gradually that fine young man wastes away. Day and night the mother, whose advancing years and infirmities demand the attention, watches over him with a breaking heart. All is done that strong affection can inspire. It is vain. Oh! what sorrow through these months! And when the end comes, what tongue can describe the agony?

We wonder if it will ever cease to be true that "man was made to mourn." Thank God we can entertain the prospect of the complete cessation of sorrow. "Neither sorrow." "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." For "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick."

III. Sickness is the prelude to death. It usually precedes. Any sickness may end in it. Death changes everything: the body different; the soul different. But there shall be no more death. There will be the perpetuated life of paradise regained; for there will be the tree of life; there will be the resurrection body (1 Cor. xv. 53, 54).

IV. Sickness, sorrow, and death are the fruit of sin. Does not Scripture thus trace them? There was no sickness before sin. Sin was the seed. The heavenly city is free from sin. There is perfect holiness. It is the completion of the redeeming work of Christ from sin, sorrow, death. The seed which bears sickness is taken out of the soil.

Shall we dwell in that city of immortal health? Are we travelling towards it? If not, we cannot reach it. Jesus is the way. Come to Him (Rev. xxi. 27). It is a prepared place for a prepared people.—*J. Rawlinson.*

Recovery from Sickness.

(Sermon to the Young.)

xxxiii. 24. *And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.*

Our sun-dial is not that of Hezekiah: its shadow has no backward movement; the last enemy must soon challenge the traveller to pay the tax imposed on his pilgrimage. When all the pains and illnesses of the flesh are over, there remaineth a place purchased, prepared, and furnished for the children of God, and in which "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Where is this healthy spot? Not in any place in this country; not in the world of which our land is so favoured a portion. To be able always to say, "I am not sick," is one of the privileges of heaven alone.

I. The evils and disagreeables of sickness.

Sickness is certainly not a pleasant thing—necessary, profitable, if you please, but not pleasant. It cannot be pleasant; for it is the punishment for sin. Angels are never sick, because they are of that world of which the inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick." Sickness helps to crumble us into death; diseases are Death's servants. Death sends them out in their different liveries as his couriers and forerunners; they apprise sinners that their Master is coming into their country, passing by that way, will perhaps "stand at their door and knock," warning each to be ready to leave all and follow death, as Peter said he and his fellow-apostles had done for Christ (H. E. I. 1561).

1. Bodily pain often accompanies sickness. This is sometimes felt in so grievous and dreadful a degree that the sufferer wishes and prays for death to be relieved from his agonies. When David was tried in this way he said, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me"—a strong expression, meaning very excruciating pains. Who can tell but those who have felt them what sufferings belong to the burning fever, the

tormenting headache, &c.? The curious machine is out of order; the wheels grind and grate against each other; "the harp with a thousand strings is out of tune and full of discords." The very means taken for recovery often, for a time at least, increase pain and suffering. We admire the wisdom which God has given to man to discover the healing virtues concealed in Nature's works. But most of these, excellent in their effects, are nauseous to the taste. It seems as if Providence had ordained this on purpose that everything should conspire in sickness to make it a suffering, uncomfortable time, in order the more deeply to impress on us the salutary lessons it is intended to teach us.

2. The interruption it causes to the active duties of life. Health is the one thing needful, not only to the enjoyment of life, but to the vigorous and successful discharge of its duties.

3. One might mention a third evil, viz., the trouble one gives in sickness to those around us, only you might be ready to cry out, "We cannot allow this to be either a trouble or an evil; what sister or affectionate brother would think this a trouble?" But often the sufferer feels it keenly.

II. THE PROFITS AND ADVANTAGES OF SICKNESS.

Begin by thanking Jesus Christ that sickness is not a punishment and nothing else—not a certainty and foretaste of hell. His sacrifice has taken away its sting; it bears the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. It withdraws us from the world. We follow too hotly and incessantly the things of the world. Some years ago a satire was written upon us called "The World Without Souls," and the author, without exaggerating, nearly proved that most of us live as if we thought this was really to be the case.

CONCLUSION.—So improve the sickness of earth as to make it the path to the health of heaven. In health often look back to the time of sickness: consider what were then your feelings, your fears, your good resolutions. Have you kept your word? Have you done your part? Is the Great Physician paid? He seeks not gold, but the coin of gratitude, love, and obedience. Every sickness should urge us to secure the country without pain; to win the new heavens and the new earth in which Christ's redeemed people shall be crowned with unfading youth and unbroken health.—*George Clark, M.A.: Sermons*, pp. 59–68.

THE CONTROVERSY OF ZION.

xxxiv. 8. *For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, &c.*

The Lord has always been mindful of His Church. He is pledged to her defence against the world, and against the world-spirit which often intrudes within her pale. Chapter xxxiv. contains a description of the effects of the Divine vengeance in the typical case of Edom; chapter xxxv. describes the flourishing state of the Church consequent upon the execution of the Divine judgments.

I. There is a parallel between God's dealings with individuals and society. Such a parallel may be presumed to exist, inasmuch as any society is made up of individuals; and God cares equally for the single and the corporate life. Taking the mass of men, evil dispositions lead to evil deeds and these to habits, before they are turned to the service of God. God intervenes in the way of judgment; times of judgment are appointed them, foreshadowing a future day of the Lord's vengeance. 1. *Individual judgments.* God's controversy with Jacob at Peniel, when Jacob's thigh was put out of joint, was but the climax of the Divine vengeance in respect of his sinful past, and became the *turning-point* of his life. Not only are bad men changed in this way, but good men are made better (xxxviii. 12–14; Lam. iii. 3–21; Job x. 16–20; H. E. I. 56–59, 66–70, 116). God strikes, that human nature may be laid bare in its depths, and a thorough work of regeneration accomplished, proceeding from within out-

ward. Afflictions do not always soften; but they do so often enough to form a large part of the method of the Divine vengeance. 2. *Social and national judgments.* Jacob became Israel, and Israel the Church of God, the representative of God on earth, even as Edom, of which Esau, the godless, was the ancestor, is regarded in Scripture as the representative of the world-power. Edom was emphatically the troubler of Israel. Its judgments—prophetic of greater in the future—were sent by the Defender of Zion—(1.) To make manifest its sin; (2.) To show the theocratic character of Israel.

But the Edom, or world-spirit, was in Israel herself; hence the judgments of the Church. The idea of the theocracy was interfered with when Israel wished a king, like the other nations (1 Sam. viii. 6, 7). That could only be entertained by Jehovah if kings held their right to rule direct from Himself. And so He raised up *David and David's line* (1 Sam. xvi. 1–13; Gen. xlix. 8). Hence the institution and perpetuation of the prophetic line—Samuel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, &c.—to assert and maintain the idea of the theocracy.

With a grander display of the Divine power this tale has been re-told under the Christian dispensation. Social and national crises are still brought about, in the wise judgment of God, first, to make manifest the sins of communities and nations; and, second, to direct men to the Church of Christ. In times of *the Church's unfaithfulness*, apostles, truly apostolic men, reformers, &c., interfere.

II. **Antagonism between the Church and the world must end in the defeat and subjugation of the world.** Jehovah is the defender of the cause of Zion through the ages. He has espoused the cause of holiness against ungodliness. His people may be dispersed, but the Church does not die out. From the lowest ebb it returns to the flow. The blood of its martyrs becomes seed. Its opponents turn ever feebler. This is seen in their more spasmodic efforts. Its benign influence has extended far; ever larger numbers are being brought under its yoke. The world fights every inch of the ground; but—

III. **The great day is surely coming.** 1. There must come a complete manifestation of the Church's inherent glory. (1.) This manifestation will take place by displays of Divine vengeance on the enemies of Zion. This method of the ancient time has not become obsolete. (2.) The manifestation will not be short-lived, but continue, so that destruction may be succeeded by a realised state of salvation. (3.) Last of all, there shall be seen the triumph of the Church, when Church and world shall be conterminous, and fulness of blessing be enjoyed. (Chapter xxxv. still awaits its largest fulfilment.)

CONCLUSION.—1. We have a Gospel of terror to preach to the world—*a Gospel of terror*, for the Divine vengeance is informed by the greatest heart of love. Is the Church, as some say, becoming less powerful in our time? Let the question at least provoke searchings of heart. God still sends judgments upon unfaithful Churches. 2. Remember, in times of darkness and trial, that the Lord has the deepest interest in His Church. It cannot disappear from the world; but be alive to removing from it causes of weakness. 3. Let us encourage one another in the hope of a time when the Church's glory shall be fully manifested, when the time of recompenses for the long controversy of Zion shall arrive. Let us work in the Church so as to help to bring about the glad time coming.—*J. Macrae Simcox.*

A CALL TO STUDY.

xxxiv. 16. *Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord, and read, &c.*

On the supposition that a Divine revelation is given to man, its most convenient method will be that of a permanent written record, thus available for the use of successive gene-

Disparagement of a book

revelation proceeds from misconception of its nature and ends. Out of its existence flows the universal right to its perusal, unless it is restricted in terms. Not only the right, but the duty. By personal study every one should know it (John v. 39). Our Lord appealed to the conscience of the people, combined with their knowledge of the Word of God.

The duty is here urged in reference to the prediction of the downfall of Idumea. It was to become a desolation. Those into whose hands the prophecy falls are to search and read in the Book of the Lord, and compare the event. Nothing shall fail. Everything said shall find its mate, its corresponding fact; for God's Spirit is the Author of the prediction. Idumea to-day is its confirmation.

We use the text in order to urge the study of Scripture as a Christian duty—

I. BECAUSE THE BOOK IS DIVINE.

2 Tim. iii. 16; 2 Tim. i. 21. It is the Book of the Lord. The Bible is a collection of the records of Divine revelations made at various times, but bearing on its great design. The inducement to read a book often depends on the author. We believe him to be endowed with literary skill, or an authority on the subject of the book. And if God is, in some way, through the various writers, the Author of the Book, the authorship is an important reason for reading it (H. E. I. 522, 523). Consider who and what He is, and the solemn relations in which He stands to us (H. E. I. 561). Its subjects will be worthy of Him and important to us. It will be authoritative. From the uncertainties of human thought we find in the Lord's Book a safe resting-place.

II. BECAUSE THE BOOK IS INTERESTING.

In its form, apart from its subject-matter. Some form it must have. It might have been in the form of didactic statement only, without illustrative facts or poetic beauties. It would not have been read with interest. Or it might have been in the catechetical form. However useful this method in fastening definite notions in carefully chosen words, it would have failed to be a book to which men and women would return with delight as they return to the Bible after the period of youth has passed away. It is made interesting by the varied forms in which truth is communicated. It is poetic, historical, biographical. Its teaching is usually so connected with events and persons as to present points of interest always fresh. The man finds a solution of the profoundest problems of time and eternity. The child finds in its narratives of persons and events a charm that never fails. To its interesting form is owing, in a large degree, its hold on those who read it from day to day (H. E. I. 607–609, 3860).

III. BECAUSE THE BOOK IS INSTRUCTIVE.

It contains a large amount of information, not only with regard to the Jewish nation, but also other nations of the ancient world. But this is not its main design. It is subordinate to the revelation of man as a sinner and of God as a Saviour. God's character, man's relation to Him, human duty, the future state, are all instructively treated; but they all find their place in relation to God's great plan for man's recovery, through the mediation of Christ, from misery and sin. And is not this the most important of all instruction? What would all history be, all science, all philosophy, if no voice from Heaven was heard respecting the most vital of all questions? Do you desire instruction respecting salvation? Search and read in the Book of the Lord.

IV. BECAUSE THE BOOK IS DIRECTIVE.

Is not the course of human life like that of a vessel exposed to winds that may drive her leagues out of her proper course? Does not man need careful guidance? Conscience is the captain, but conscience untaught and unguided will manage the ship uncertainly and erroneously (H. E. I. 1299–1307). The Book of the Lord is the

directory for the conscience. No position demanding moral action can ever occur in which adherence to its direction will not issue safely. How pure its principles! How righteous its commands! How wise its directions! They touch our life at every point.

V. BECAUSE THE BOOK IS CONSOLATORY.

Sorrows are incident to human life. There are present troubles. Some are heart-breaking. We need help and comfort. The world does not contain it. Here is the balm that can heal every wound.

And there is the future. The prospect of death and eternity. Without the Book of the Lord men are uncertain and hopeless. It sheds clear light on both. How many, in the prospect, are delivered from fear and filled with hope! What comfort it affords under the bereaving stroke!

For all these reasons "seek ye out the Book of the Lord." Bring every question to it. Read it daily, thoughtfully, for yourself, for others. In your youth. In your active manhood. In your old age.—*J. Rawlinson.*

THE BOOK THAT WILL ENDURE TESTING.

xxxiv. 16. *Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord, and read, &c.*

We may be sure that God would not give a revelation without affixing His seal to it; otherwise, it would be useless, there being no evidence of its Divine origin. Supposing a revelation given, what would constitute a satisfactory proof of its divinity? Evidently it must be some sign not capable of being counterfeited, some unmistakable indication that GOD has spoken to us. This might be given by some exertion of Divine power or some manifestation of Divine knowledge. As such, miracles and prophecy would furnish indubitable proof that a revelation was from God, and those which attest the Bible are its proper seals. Along with the internal evidence and the argument drawn from the success of the Gospel, they are so many buttresses supporting the edifice of revealed truth; but each is a distinct and sufficient support by itself. The Scriptures themselves appeal to the evidence of fulfilled prophecy in support of their reception as the Word of God, and one of the most pointed of these appeals is that before us. In this chapter Isaiah predicts the desolations that were to come upon the chief city of Edom. Placing himself forward in time amid the scenes he predicts, he challenges any one to compare the predictions in the Book of the Lord with the actual condition of the city; he is confident that "the Book" will bear that test, and will come out of it triumphantly.

I. Read the prophecy before us in the light of its fulfilment. The apologetic value of prophecy has often been discredited. Attempts have been made to explain it on natural grounds, as a sagacious forecast, a shrewd prognostication. But what natural sagacity could have foreseen that Edom, so powerful and prosperous in Isaiah's time, would become a desolate waste? It has been well remarked that prophecy possesses as a proof of Divine revelation some advantages that are peculiar. Its fulfilment may fall under our own observation, or may be conveyed to us by living witnesses. The evidence from miracles can never be stronger than it was at first; but that of prophecy is increasing, and will go on increasing until the whole scheme of perdition is fulfilled. It is the accomplishment, and not the mere publication of a prophecy, which supplies a proof of the Divine origin of the Bible; and this evidence is constantly accumulating. The prophets themselves did not understand some of their oracles (1 Pet. i. 11, 12). They were like documents written in colourless ink, to which some chemical preparation must be applied to make

their characters legible. Their meaning could be seen only in their fulfilment. But all the prophetic writings are not thus obscure: many are clear and definite; more like the details of a historical narrative than the visions of prophecy. Nothing can be plainer than the description here given of the state to which Edom would be reduced. The wards of this lock are too intricate to be opened by any key which we choose to apply to it; but the fitting key has been found. "The whole," says Alexander, "is a magnificent prophetic picture, the fidelity of which, so far as it relates to ancient Edom, is notoriously attested by its desolation for a course of ages." The chief city in the region of Mount Seir was Selah or Petra, the Rock City. It was long unknown till it was discovered by Robinson, and since then it has been visited by successive travellers. It lay embedded among the hills. So nestled was it in its rocks "that it could only be approached by two narrow defiles. Dwellings cut out of the solid stone line the face of the cliffs, and the central space indicates that a large city once stood upon it." Malachi speaks of its utter desolation (Mal. i. 2, 3), but afterwards it recovered for a time. Its condition for centuries as described by unbiassed witnesses is a standing evidence of the truth of the prophetic Word.

II. We may test "the Book" in other fields. As a tourist verifies his guide-book and finds it trustworthy at every step, so in many regions do we find the prophetic Word made sure (2 Pet. i. 19–21). Babylon, Tyre, and the fortunes of the Jewish people, all bear witness to the truth of the prophecies. But especially in the career of our Lord and Saviour do we meet with remarkable fulfilments of Scripture. What could be more minute than some of the prophecies concerning Him? His miracles, His submission to unmerited suffering, His riding upon an ass, His being pierced, His being sold for thirty pieces of silver which should be applied for the purchase of the Potter's Field, the lots cast on His vesture, and the vinegar given Him to drink, were all the subject of definite prediction.

III. The Bible will bear testing in its declarations concerning human nature. No book so unveils us to ourselves. We feel its truth in what it says about our noble origin, our lamentable fall, our sinfulness, and the strife within us between the flesh and the spirit. Because it tells us all that ever we did, we feel that it must be Divine.

IV. From all this two sound and important conclusions follow: — 1. *We may put equal confidence in its declarations concerning God.* Nothing but Divine knowledge and insight can so disclose the future and the hidden; and if we have found the Bible reliable when it tells us of earthly things, may we not believe it when it tells us of heavenly things? 2. *We may be sure that its prophecies concerning the future of Christ's kingdom and the destiny of the human race will in like manner be fulfilled to the letter* (Ps. lxxii. 11, 17; Rom. viii. 19 23). So many of the prophecies of God's Word have already been accomplished, that we should feel confident that those not yet fulfilled are surely marching on to their fulfilment. The prospects of success in the mission-field are brighter in our day than ever they were. The Church is taking an interest in the enterprise quite unknown to former generations, and openings have been made into lands before closed alike against commerce and Christianity. But even if our hopes of success were less cheering, we would not despair. With so many Bible predictions behind us in the past now become history, we cannot but be encouraged to look for the fulfilment of those glowing promises concerning the future coming of the Redeemer's kingdom which stand on the inspired page. Let us never lose sight of those grand predictions; let us cherish a hopeful and expectant spirit, and in the confidence of success descend to the spiritual harvest of the world (H. E. I. 1166–1168).—*William Guthrie, M.A.*

THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

xxxiv. 16, 17. *Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord, &c.*

The text occurs midway between a series of predicted judgments pronounced on Edom as the representative of the wicked world, and another series of blessings foretold concerning the Church of God, but it is evidently retrospective.

While a minute verification of these predictions of vengeance might form a solid, convincing argument for the validity of trust in the Bible as the rule of faith and practice, there is another and more general way of regarding the text. Search into a certain book is enjoined because it is the Book of JEHOVAH.

Human faith finds its ultimate basis in God Himself. The certainty of the Divine judgments may therefore be inferred from—

I. THE NATURE OF THE DIVINE BEING.

If the Bible be not merely a revelation *from* God, but a revelation *of* God, too much attention cannot be paid to those aspects of the Divine nature afforded by it which man may apprehend although he cannot comprehend them. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" &c. No; but enough may be learned of God to make us sure that it is madness to disobey Him or trifle with His commands. 1. *The long-hidden Name of God.* Proper names were made very expressive among the Jews. The name JEHOVAH was sacred above all others; they treated it with a superstitious reverence, not daring to pronounce it, &c. Doubtless they referred with awe to the time and circumstances of its communication to Moses (Exod. vi. 1, 2). And so may we in thinking of the Divine judgments. JEHOVAH, it is said, "remembered His covenant," and was about to redeem the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt "with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments" (Exod. vi. 1–8). JEHOVAH: what does the Name mean? *Being*—unconditioned, absolute, immutable, eternal Being. If, then, God changes not, but is JEHOVAH, to sin against Him is inevitably to call down judgment; for JEHOVAH'S will must be done on earth as it is in heaven. 2. *Some of the attributes by the use of which we try to compass the Divine nature.* (1.) *God is just.* But sin, in all its forms, is a crying injustice, and affronts God so that the Divine majesty must assert itself in punishment. (2.) *God is good.* But sin, as selfishness, is radically opposed to goodness in God, who has might, as well as right, on His side, and, therefore, pursues selfishness to its last resort. (3.) *God is holy.* Separateness from all sin distinguishes Him in the midst of His *relations* to man. How, then, can sinners go unpunished? (H. E. I. 2281, 2282, 4478–4479, 4603–4610).

II. THE CHARACTER OF DIVINE LAW.

Law is a transcript of the Divine nature; the Divine *character* or handwriting making Him known to us; the far-reaching *Hand* of the Eternal. God reveals Himself in its *sanctions, reward,* and *punishment.* To obey is to reap reward; to disobey is to be laid hold of *instantly* by the outraged majesty of law. There is no human way of escape. Visible judgment may be deferred, but the Divine law is cognisant of all transgression. In the matter of the first sin, the formerly existing *potentiality* of punishment became an *actuality.* The character of the Divine law may be seen—1. *In the physical world.* The designer of a ship or bridge diverges from mathematical truth only to produce disaster. 2. *In Providence.* 3. *In the Word of God.*

APPLICATION.—*If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* The Divine judgments cannot be evaded. "God is love;" but what love? God is "a consuming fire;" not sentimentally

weak; not given to winking at transgression. 2. God's *grace* magnifies His name and law. He condemned Christ as the *Sin-Bearer* to *death*. Thank God! the sinner may be pardoned, but the impenitent are surely handed over to punishment.—*J. Macrae Simcock.*

TRANSFORMATION.

xxxv. 1, 2, 7. *The wilderness and the solitary place, &c.*

Chapters xxxiv., xxxv., form one prediction, first announcing the doom of Edom, and then taking us into a new sphere where all is light, beauty, and gladness; a prediction which had a fulfilment in the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon to Jerusalem, which they set above their chiefest joy. But the prophecy is one of those in which the co-called secondary meaning is, in truth, the primary; the spiritual takes precedence of the natural, and the fulfilment is to be looked for, not in a remnant of Israel returning to the land of their fathers, but in these grand Gospel times, in which humanity, cursed and bloated by sin, is blessed, saved, and dignified by the influences that stream from the Cross of Calvary.

I. The sad condition of the localities on which the Gospel is intended to operate.

How suggestive the descriptive symbols: a "wilderness," a "solitary place," "parched ground," a "habitation of dragons." The desolation turns mainly on the absence of water. No other similes could so vividly depict moral barrenness and death. The unregenerate heart is desolate, weary, solitary. Moreover, it is "a habitation of dragons," a foul serpent-brood of uncontrolled passions.

This true of the world as well as of the individual. Think of the great unreclaimed wastes of heathendom. Can civilisation renew them? It has been tried and found wanting (α). Only the Water of Life, gushing from the smitten Rock, can give moral life.

II. The effects produced by the kingdom of Jesus (β).

Even we can appreciate the value of water and the beauty of its effects. But to Orientals water is a matter of life and death. Hence as an emblem it is employed to bring before the mind the blessed and joy-giving results of the kingdom of Christ. Note these results as they are brought before us in our text. 1. *Gladness.* "The wilderness and the solitary place," &c. Music of Nature after copious rains following on scorching heat. This an emblem of the joy brought to human hearts by the Gospel. The wilderness state one of sorrow; the river of the water of life running through the heart makes it glad. This is seen in cases where sin and terror are cast out of the heart by the love of God. How this result has been manifested in modern times in nations converted from idolatry to Christianity (H. E. I. 1134). 2. *Fertility.* "It shall blossom," &c. The desert is barren. The Gospel changes moral wilderness into fruitful gardens; the individual, the nation. 3. *Beauty.* Think first of a part of the earth's surface parched, desert, and barren, and then of it as a garden covered with the fairest flowers. The first and most striking impression made upon the mind by such a transformation would not be so much that of fertility as of surpassing beauty. So with this moral transformation. Contrast the state of a country before with its condition after having received the Gospel (H. E. I. 1126, 1127). Look at the annals of missionary effort: Madagascar, Samoa, the Fiji Islands, &c. The same change occurs in individual character. 4. *Glory and majesty.* "The glory of Lebanon," &c. Symbols of all that is glorious and majestic. To live by the power of Jesus the secret of a noble life. Alliance with heaven raises men to regal dignity. The Gospel elevates the character and dignifies the pursuits of men. Our

lower pursuits are ennobled by a Christian aim, whilst the higher life has the very glory of God resting on it. 5. A vision that extends into the Holy of holies. "They shall see the glory of Jehovah," &c. Only in Christ can we see this. He is the glory of God. The Shekinah is seen above the blood-besprinkled mercy-seat.—*John Kay in the Modern Scottish Pulpit*, vol. i. pp. 133–143 (α).

This chapter is an anticipation of the great prophecy of the restoration (xl.–lxvi.) The firm confidence in God, the boundless hopefulness, the glowing visions of the future, the vigour and joyousness that spread so broad a splendour over that famous Scripture are here in a brief compendium. It has been assigned to the state of Judah under Hezekiah, to the return from the exile, to the Christian dispensation, to a future condition of Palestine, to some future state of the Church or of the world, as well as to some other occasions. Two plain facts are before us—1. At no period of Jewish history was there any approach to a perfect realisation of the magnificent promises of this and allied predictions. 2. God has already given to us so substantial a foretaste of the blessings here promised, that we may rest assured that the one satisfying fulfilment of the prophecy will be in the triumph of the kingdom of heaven through the power of the Gospel of Christ.

Let us look at the picture in the light of its growing fulfilment.

I. THE OLD SCENE OF THE GARDEN. We are not independent of things around us. Christianity has a transforming influence over our earthly surroundings. It is the most beneficent factor in material civilisation, the truest patron of art, science, literature, commerce (H. E. I. 1124–1131, 1134). But behind this lies a deeper truth. By transforming our hearts the Gospel changes all things to us. This transforming influence is shown in various relations. 1. The *wilderness* of old bad things is cleared, and gives place to new and better things. The axe must come before the plough. 2. *The solitary place and the desert.* It is not all weeds and bushes. The task of fertilising the desert with irrigation not less difficult than that of clearing the wilderness. (1.) So there are souls that seem to have lost all soil for spiritual life. (2.) Then there are deserts of ruin, the remains of old withered hopes and joys and loves.

II. THE NEW CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GARDEN. 1. *Life.* This is the first and most important thing. Christ, the one Saviour of society, was the greatest of iconoclasts. But He was also the greatest founder, originator, constructor. He sows seed, gives increase, brings life. 2. *Beauty.* The desert blossoms as the rose. The garden is not to be solely utilitarian. The Church is the bride of Christ, and as such she is to be adorned with every grace. 3. *Gladness.* Life and beauty bring joy. The Church not a prison-house of melancholy devotion. 4. *Varied accessories.* The garden will not only produce its own seedlings, but plants from all quarters are to be carried into it. Lebanon gives his cedars; Carmel his woods for the lower slopes; Sharon his far-famed rose. Christians are heirs of all things. "All things are yours."

In conclusion, observe two important points:—1. *This wonderful transformation will be brought about by the power of God* (ver. 4). We have tried long enough to reform the world by merely human agency. The Hebrew prophets promised Divine help. Christ fulfils that promise. He comes with life-giving power. Seek Him in faith and obedience. 2. *All this is a picture of the future.* Christ has done much for the weary world. But the old promises are as yet fulfilled in but a small part. The Hebrews set the golden age not in the past, but in the future. We too must assume their attitude of faith, and hope, and patience (H. E. I. 3421). Are we ready to cry, "Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?" Let us remember that God has all eternity to work with. Meanwhile, let us do

what we can to convert our little corner of the vast wilderness into some beginnings of the garden of the Lord. —*W. F. Adeney, M.A.: Clerical World*, i. 231.

(α.) The civilisation of Greece and Rome did not affect anything in the way of changing spiritual death into spiritual life. The utmost which it succeeded in effecting was to cover the frightful corruption of death with a more beautiful funeral pall—to hide the naked hideousness of sin behind a veil spangled with silver, and gold, and precious stones. But death was there none the less, and sin of such a kind that the foulest impurities of the most degraded heathen could not exceed the impurities of Athens and of Rome. The old lesson is being taught us, if we would but learn it, in our own day. It is not civilisation that can change the moral desolation of France, of Spain, of Austria. It is not civilisation, as understood by men of science and doctrinaire philosophers, that can change the moral wilderness existing in our large cities, and in much of our rural population. It will only do what it did in Greece; it will merely cover the ghastliness of death with a more decent covering.—*Kay.*

(β.) See outlines on pp. 364, 365.

Encouragement for the Timid.

xxxv. 3, 4. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, &c.*

The Christian ministry addresses itself to men of various character in various states. It must be adapted to all. Sometimes warning and denunciation, sometimes tenderness, but always love. The text is addressed to the officers and leading men of Jerusalem in a time of general alarm. The prophet declares that the power of the enemy shall be broken, and that instead of desolation there shall be gladness. The timid and weak were to be encouraged. God's strength is made perfect in man's weakness.

I. The persons to whom this encouraging message is addressed.

"The weak hands,"—"the feeble knees,"—"them that are of a fearful heart." Timidity has paralysed them. After a desolating war the nation might thus lose heart. A timid woman who sees insuperable difficulty always in the way. A man in a storm at sea lies lamenting that he ventured on the waters. Some characters shrink from every touch. They are well-intentioned, but their faint hearts bar every effort; and they pass through life purposing and projecting, but never accomplishing anything (H. E. I. 2053, 2054).

This timid and feeble disposition may be manifested in spiritual as well as in other things. For instance—1. *In relation to Christian experience.* It is the privilege of believers in Christ to know their salvation. But many fail to attain it. They do not doubt His sufficiency, but their own interest in it. They fear their sins are not forgiven, their spiritual experience not genuine. Sometimes this is the result of a tendency to view every subject in its darker aspects. Sometimes it is the result of disease. Sometimes of unwatchfulness, negligence, and sin. Sometimes of defective conceptions of the Gospel. Sometimes of a microscopic self-scrutiny which exposes failings and defects with severe faithfulness. The victim of such fears is like one who wishes to reach the city but is never sure that he is in the right way. 2. *In relation to Christian enterprise.* Christians are not converted merely for their own safety. There is a work to do. Sinful habits, dispositions, tempers to be overcome. The dark mass of humanity to be brightened. The Gospel is to be carried to the destitute. This work requires the gifts and opportunities in the hands of Christians. But the weak and faint-hearted tremble at every undertaking. To them the missionary enterprise is a hopeless expenditure of money and life. The time for useful labour in the Church never arrives. If it is commenced, it is abandoned when difficulties present themselves. These weak brethren do nothing themselves and repress the plans and efforts of bolder and more enterprising Christians (H. E. I. 2057, 2058). Among your fears let there be

the fear lest by your fears you should hinder the cause of Christ!

II. ITS NATURE AND IMPORT.

It is intended to strengthen and confirm the feeble. God's messengers are to speak words by which faith and courage may be reanimated. They contain—

1. *An assurance of deliverance.* The deliverance of the Jewish people included the punishment of their enemies. God saves in a way suitable to each case. If your own resources are inadequate, the Divine resources are equal to the emergency. He will save you from your spiritual fears. Has He not sent His Son? Has not Jesus died? Does He not intercede? Does not His Spirit work? His willingness to save is equal to His ability. What wondrous love to man in the work of redemption! Do you fear that you will be eventually rejected, or that you will fail in the service to which He calls you? (John vi. 37; Matt. xxviii. 20). The message is addressed to your faith. It reminds you of God's power and grace in Christ. It casts you on the all-sufficiency of God.

2. *A rebuke of fear.* "Fear not." Hope is the opposite of fear and the accompaniment of courage. The fear of the unaccustomed sailor is dissipated when the captain announces that the storm is passing away. The little child alone in a dark room is afraid, although she knows not why. But the mother comes and says there is nothing to fear; there is no fear where she is. So let God's presence and promise drive away all fear respecting our spiritual condition and our Christian work (P. D. 1248, 1257, 1258).

3. *An incitement to labour.* "Be strong." When God's work calls, we must neither yield to fear nor indolence. The father leads his child to the post of duty where his life-work must be done. He sees something of the complicated work of the manufactory, and fears that he will never be equal to it. His father says, "Be a man; face your work, and strength for it will come." So God says, "Be strong." Here is work in the Church and the world. You are weak. Use the strength He gives. It will grow by use. "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." "Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

Thus God sends the message of encouragement. Weak hands are strengthened. Feeble knees are confirmed. Fearful hearts are rendered courageous. And His encouragement is necessary to comfort in the Christian life, performance of duty, endurance of suffering and reproach. And it helps to recommend the Gospel.—*J. Rawlinson.*

Presumption and fear are the Scylla and Charybdis of the Christian life, and it requires Divine guidance, together with all our own watchfulness, to steer safely between them. On the one hand, many are inclined to indulge in vain confidence, and take to themselves the Christian name and hope when not entitled to them; and on the other, many are fearful and disposed to shrink back from duties and privileges which really belong to them. It demands much wisdom on the part of a pastor so to speak as not to encourage false hopes, nor discourage weak and timid piety, especially in reference to a public profession of religion. My object is, to suit the case of those who are well entitled to hope for the Divine mercy through Christ Jesus, but are disquieting themselves, or are disquieted by the enemy, with needless fears. In meeting their wants I will state, and reply to, the reasoning by which I know that many disturb their own peace.

1. "I cannot indulge the hope that I am a Christian, *because I have never passed through the same religious exercises and experiences that others profess to have felt and enjoyed.*" It is not necessary to dwell at large upon this difficulty. God has brought many sons to glory, but no two of them have been led thither in precisely the same way, or have been exercised with precisely the same feelings. If, in the main, our experiences correspond with the Word of God in the great points of faith and love, it need not disquiet us though

we never heard of another case exactly like our own (H. E. I. 1410–1429).

2. "*If I were truly a child of God, sin would not prevail against me as I find it does.*" Answer:—Sin is never perfectly subdued in our hearts as long as we remain upon earth. Some boast of having attained to sinless perfection, but they seem to be labouring under a sort of hallucination, like that of one in an insane asylum, amid his straw and rags, who fancies himself a king, when he is indeed but a poor pitiable object. "The righteous falleth seven times a day," &c. Read St. Paul's experience in the last part of the 7th of Romans and be encouraged thereby (H. E. I. 329, 1057, 2313, 2861, 4571–4573).

3. "I find that sin not only prevails against me, *but I seem to be worse than when I first strove against it; my heart appears to grow more wicked, my corruptions stronger, and my strength to resist to be less.*" Answer:—To *perceive* more of our sin than usual does not always prove that we are more sinful, but often the reverse, just as when one cleanses a room, though the air is filled with dust floating in the sunbeams, there is no more of it actually there than before, and there will soon be less of it as the operation goes on. We do not know the strength of our evil passions until we begin to oppose them. It is also undoubtedly true that when one is making a special effort to lead a Christian life, that then he is especially tempted and hindered, and that the motions of sin are then more violent. And further than this, when any are endeavouring to break away from the dominion of Satan, then he assails them with his most powerful temptations (H. E. I. 1060–1062, 1066–1068, 2524, 2525).

4. Another class of disquieted ones affirm that they cannot hope they are true Christians, *because they seem to love everything else more than God.* But in estimating our love to God compared with our love to earthly things, we are not to conclude that we love that most which most excites our affections. It has been well remarked "that a man may be more moved when he sees a friend that has long been absent, and seem to regard him more for the moment than he does his own wife and children, and yet none would think that the friend was loved the most;" so neither must we conclude because when we are abroad in the world we find our affections vehemently stirred towards its various objects, that therefore they are supreme in our hearts. We should judge of our comparative affection by asking ourselves soberly which of the two objects we should prefer to part with (H. E. I. 3365, 3366, 4188, 4189).

5. "*A person may in appearance be like a Christian, and yet be really destitute of any true piety.*" Answer:—Fear is usually the best remedy against the thing feared, and none are farther from the danger of making a false profession than those who are most afraid of it (H. E. I. 339, 2050–2053).

6. Some again have fears that they are not true Christians, *because they come so far short of the attainments of some eminent Christians of their acquaintance.* We reply that the worst part of the character of those exalted saints may not be known to us, or they may not have our hindrances, or they may have been long in growing up to that state, while we are only, as it were, babes in Christ (H. E. I. 2508–2526).

7. Another class say *that they cannot think any real Christian ever was so tempted and distressed with evil thoughts as they are.* We reply, Job was tempted to curse God, and Christ Himself to worship Satan. We may have very wicked thoughts entering our minds, but if we strive against them and they are painful to us, they are no evidence against us. Christ had thoughts as vile as these suggested to Him, but He remained sinless (H. E. I. 4767–4779).

8. Another class say *that they have doctrinal difficulties, that certain things in the Bible do not appear clear to them,* and they fear to make any public confession of Christ till these things are made plain. We reply that the best

way to solve doctrinal difficulties is to engage in practical duties. Any one perplexed upon points of doctrine should read but little on those points, but engage earnestly in all acts of obedience which the Bible enjoins, praying fervently and humbly to be guided into all truth. One day's labour in the field of charity, or one step onward in the path of known duty, will bring more light into the soul upon disputed points than weeks of speculation and controversy (H. E. I. 590–596, 1797). It would be endless to recount all the ways in which doubts and fears assail us. Their name is legion, and our prayer should be that Christ would command them to come out of the man who is troubled with them, and to enter no more into him.—*W. H. Lewis, D.D.: Plain Sermons for the Christian Year.*

The Healer and Joy-Giver.

xxxv. 5, 6. *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, &c.*

This beautiful prophecy is not exhausted by the first fulfilment of the promise which immediately precedes. However great the political deliverance, it did not include the literal giving of sight to the blind or hearing to the deaf. Nor is it only poetic imagery. It points to something in the time of the Messiah, to whose manifestation the scheme of Old Testament history and prophecy is subordinate. We find in this text—

I. The blessings Christ imparts. 1. We find in the life of Christ a literal fulfilment of the text, which compels us to regard it as fulfilled in Him (Matt. xx. 30–34; Mark vii. 32–35; John v. 5–9, &c.) Now these are historical facts. Useless to say they are miracles, therefore incredible, because a miracle is impossible. Who taught you that a miracle is impossible? You are assuming what you are bound to prove. The testimony of the writers of this history is worth as much as that of any other historical writers (H. E. I. 3527–3529). Many things have occurred in the world the like of which we have never seen. Moreover, the power of God must be taken into account in deciding whether a thing is possible or not. Is it not astounding presumption for a man to measure Divine power by his own; to say, because neither himself nor any man at present can work a miracle, therefore God cannot and never has? After all the argument, he fact remains. 2. We find that the coming of Christ is identified with improvements in the general character and condition of mankind, such as may be shadowed forth in these physical blessings. Where Christianity comes, the intellectual, moral, and material standard rises. Savage peoples become civilised; civilised nations reach a higher plane. The influence of personal Christianity commonly improves the social position of the individual. 3. But beyond this we find that the coming of Christ is identified with the bestowment of spiritual blessings and the effectuation of spiritual changes as remarkable as the miracles it wrought in the physical region. The spiritual disease of sin, analogous to the physical diseases it has caused, is cured by the Gospel. Take a case. One thoroughly imbued with hatred to Christ. Not content with simple indifference to Him, or rejection of His claims, he throws all the energy of an unusually energetic nature into the active measures that were adopted for the suppression of His cause. But the saving power of Christ finds him in a way unexpected and unusual. He surrenders on the spot, and puts himself under the command of Christ to do whatsoever He wills. He becomes a missionary of the cross. He is sent to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." And this case is a type of multitudes whose spiritual diseases have been healed, some of

them the most virulent and malignant. It is a work within their souls, which the power of God alone can effect. It is a change of the heart's deepest principles and affections under the influence of spiritual considerations only. It is a moral revolution. The blind eyes are opened to the glory of Christ's truth. The deaf ear listens to His voice. The dumb tongue is eloquent of His salvation, and sings His praise. And the lame man gladly walks in the way of His commandments.

II. THE JOY HE CREATES.

Gladness runs through the text. Leaping and singing are expressions of joy. The blessings of salvation find the soul in the condition of a traveller in the sandy desert, weary, footsore, lame, and silent, who unexpectedly finds a springing well, and begins to talk, and sing, and leap for joy. Joy arises in the heart—1. *From the supply of a conscious need.* Imagine the joy of those whom Christ healed, when the blind saw the light and became interested in the objects around him, when the deaf heard the sound of the human voice, when the dumb was able to make himself understood, when the lame recovered the use of his limbs. What joy was brought into many a home! And when He comes to the heart with His forgiving, cleansing, healing love, what gladness He brings! It is the beginning of days. It is the enjoyment of life. Christians have sources of happiness of which the world knows nothing. "Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory" (H. E. I. 3041). 2. *From the manifestation of a compassionate Saviour.* His healing miracles illustrate His character. Beneficence, tender sympathy with human suffering, love to man marked His steps. It brought Him down from heaven. It nailed Him to the cross. And He is still the same. He is personally interested in His people (H. E. I. 952–957). He is the object of Divine love, and therefore joy. 3. *From the satisfaction of settled faith.* Faith connects the soul with Him. But it is often assailed. It needs support even where it exists. The disciples sometimes wavered, then some new confirmation was afforded. John the Baptist in prison doubted, therefore received the message (Matt. xi. 4–6). Jesus used His miracles in evidence. Nor must we surrender their evidential power. And there is the confirmatory evidence of experience. This is always fresh.

1. This subject calls for grateful love. Give evidence of your cure by getting the spirit of Christ's compassionate love, and by being His instruments for the cure of others. 2. You too are still in the power of the disease; come to Him for healing.—*J. Rawlinson.*

THE CURSE DONE AWAY.

XXXV. 5, 6. *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, &c.*

The years of fulfilment linger, and faith is weak and faint. The picture of hopeless helplessness is painted in the context (vers. 3, 4). If we fail, God's promise cannot (vers. 1, 2). The transformation of the desert, the planting of Eden there, and the coming of God with vengeance and recompense are one. They signify one vast display of gracious power. It is no abstract salvation that we wait and hope for, but a Saviour. The text describes the blessings of Messiah's kingdom.

I. "Is not this poetry?" Yes, but is poetry the opposite of truth? Have not prophets ever been poets? Is not poetry the sweetest or strongest or sublimest expression of man's noblest conceptions of truth? This poem of Isaiah is an expression of God's realities. The poetry, the prophecy has its answering reality in history. The age of Christ spake back to it, and both speak on to us. Nothing shall be wanting to complete the scene. The glorious in nature shall but typify

the more glorious in man's body, mind, morals, and spiritual satisfaction and joy.

II. Spiritual and physical evil are intimately connected. 1. They are cause and effect. The physical is the sign of the spiritual. Something *radical* was wrong before the wrong things could come. This doctrine is philosophic as well as biblical. 2. It is not meant that any and every special personal affliction is the result of any given or particular personal transgression. A man is not blind because he or his parents are sinners, but *because of sin.* We are living in a violated order.

III. The cessation of physical evil can only follow the cure of evil that is spiritual. God's life, God's health, God's gladness must be poured into the dumb before his tongue can sing. The spirit of the blind must be thrilled with a heavenly vision before his eye can open on the outer world. God must come and save before the cripple can bound as the deer. 1. Man's sin must be cured, then his sorrow. The miracles of healing in the Gospels teach us this. We can never overlook the moral element in them. It was when Christ saw *faith* He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. xiii. 58). 2. Health and soundness could not be given to mankind by a mere miracle-power apart from spiritual considerations. No mere almightiness could effect it. Pentecostal gifts, if repeated, would probably produce similar signs and wonders; still miracles can never be more than periodic and intermittent. The progressive life of the Spirit of God must achieve in the race what they in the individual only foretoken. Physical healing must keep pace with moral. The body must protest against sin. 3. Any philanthropy springing from other hope lacks truth and wisdom, and must fail. It proceeds upon a mistaken conception of human nature. It only deals with symptoms. All true philanthropy must begin at the Cross. The Cross is the sign that God has come for vengeance and for recompense.

CONCLUSION. — *Learn counsel and courage.* 1. Counsel as to life's mysteries, burdens, sufferings, and sorrows. 2. Courage to endure them, and strive with them in manful faith and hope. (1.) Broken health, pains, malformations, insanities, idiocies, and all bodily and mental degeneracies and anomalies are the dreadful issue of spiritual depravity and alienation from the life of God. (2.) Sin's destined Victor is in the combat, and with His own shield and spear will take the throne. The world in which He reigns will be a world where evil is not, but good is all in all.—*William Hubbard: Christian World Pulpit*, xvi. 232.

BEAUTIFUL VISIONS EXCHANGED FOR REALITIES.

XXXV. 7. *And the parched ground shall become a pool.*

Read for "parched ground" *mirage* (*a*), and it suggests the inquiry, what would be the feelings of a wearied traveller if the mirage he was vainly pursuing should suddenly become a pool? It would be new life to him; if the vision became a reality, it would be enough. But it is not only the traveller in southern deserts beneath the burning sky that sees visions of beauty floating before his gaze. Countless thousands thirst for something better and nobler than they have. So it has been from the beginning; and 2500 years ago the prophet declared that in the days of the Messiah the soul's desires should be satisfied, that that which had been only a vision should become a reality, the mirage should become a pool.

I. Past prediction has become actual fact: in Christ ideal visions have become realities.

1. In bygone days some nobler souls dreamed dreams of a perfect human character. The "Phædo" of Plato is an illustration of this. But the dream remained a dream until Jesus of Naza-

reth lived among men. In Him all excellences that were scattered were localised, focussed, centralised; and in Him we see of what nobleness our nature is capable. 2. The yearning of some is for truth, pure truth, stripped of all human accretions and confusions. How earnestly search has been made for it! In this search philosophy and theology have been traversed and ransacked. But it is to be found only in Christ. He Himself declared, not vainly, "I am the truth." In Him are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." 3. In others, conscience is the most active faculty. Sin is to them a burden and a torment. They yearn for peace of conscience. No suffering seems to them too great if this can be attained. But they never find it until they seek it in Christ. Coming to Him, they are filled with "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." The vision has become a reality; the reality goes beyond the vision. 4. There are others led on by visions of a strong virtue and a noble life. They struggle against their passions and the allurements of the world. But alas! how numerous and lamentable are their defects! They never learn the secret of victory until they come to Christ; but when they have done this, presently they find that with truth they can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." 5. Happiness. Who has not had visions of it? Who has not sought it? But, alas! the confession to which we are all brought is that of Solomon: "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" And yet even this thirst is satisfied in Christ — profoundly, exultantly satisfied. In Him we find a happiness that breaks forth in song, and triumphs over the pains and sorrows of this mortal life. The mirage has become a pool.

II. Actual fact is present prediction; in Christ ideal vision will become realities. The soul still thirsts—1. For perfect purity; 2. For perfect rest from the carking cares of earth, and infinite calm in Jesus' love; 3. For the perfect communion of saints. In vision John saw all this in the new Jerusalem; and to all who are Christ's indeed they shall all become realities (1 Cor. ii. 9).

1. Let those to whom the prediction of our text has been fulfilled tell the glad news to others. 2. As for those who have had these visions all their lives, but up to this moment have been utterly disappointed, (1) let them learn from the experience of others, who tell them they never knew truth and happiness until they sought them in Christ; (2) let them listen to the voice of Christ, who promises to give them rest; (3) let them be sure that until they do come to Christ, the parched ground will never become a pool. The soul needs more than the vision, however bright and beautiful it may be; it needs the reality, and the reality can be found only in Christ.—*Clement Clemance, D.D.* (α)

(α.) The word *sharab*, "parched ground," A.V., more exactly "looming sand-waste," refers to the mirage, of which it is the Arabic name. The vain shadows of the world, which deceive and never satisfy, are to be replaced by the enduring joys of the kingdom of God. —*Birks.*

Some years ago we were riding over a desert in intense and almost distressing heat. We could but lie still and endure it. We turned our eyes to the south, and, lo! in the horizon there suddenly appeared a beautiful lake, which appeared studded with islands of palms! But it was only appearance, there was no water; and had we been perishing from thirst, the beautiful vision would but have mocked our need.—*Clemance.*

No one can imagine, without actual experience, the delight and eager expectation (when the vision first is seen), or the intense and bitter disappointment which the appearance of a mirage occasions to travellers, specially when their supply of water is spent.

"Still the same burning sun! No cloud in heaven!
The hot air quivers, and the sultry mist
Floats o'er the desert, with a show
Of distant waters mocking their distress."
—*Kitto.*

The word *sharab*, here rendered "parched ground," is the same that in Isaiah xlix. 10 is translated *heat*: "They shall hunger no more, they shall thirst no more; the *sharab*, nor the sun, shall never smite them more."

The primary sense of *sharab*, giving the key to both applications, is the dazzling, vibrating, noonday heat. Thence it is here taken as a name for its effect, or the mirage in the desert caused by the intense meridian rarefaction and

refraction. It is a well-known delusive appearance, arising from the motions of the heated atmosphere, taking great varieties of form, but especially suggesting pictures of grove and fountain scenery—lakes, rivers, green valleys, waving trees, cool and sequestered shades, with every image most grateful to the imagination of the wearied traveller. These often seem so vivid as to be mistaken for realities.

The very common use of the same word (*sarab*) by the Arabian poets, in this mirage sense, makes certain the real meaning here. It gives it, too, a glorious significance of which our translation, though etymologically correct, and, to a certain extent, quite plausible, falls far short. It should be rendered: "The mirage shall become a lake (a *real* lake, not a mere mockery of one), and the thirsty land springs of water." For the expressive meaning of the word rendered "thirsty land," see Deut. viii. 15—"that great and terrible wilderness." So Gesenius, very happily: *Et desertum aquæ speciem referens commutabitur in lacum—in veram aquam.* (And the desert having the *appearance* of water shall be changed into a lake—*into true water.*)

The spiritual idea which the passage, thus interpreted, suggests is most striking, whilst at the same time commending itself as having a solid basis, and far removed from the character of an arbitrary sentimentalism. It has a substantial philological support, and comes so directly from the peculiar word employed, that we are compelled to regard it as entering into the prophet's conception.

The primary reference is to the exiles returning from captivity, passing through the land of drought, the valley of Baca (Ps. lxxxiv. 7), and refreshing themselves at "the wells of salvation;" but there is a glow and a glory in the language, as in so many other parts of the Scriptures, that carries it far beyond this, though the Rationalist, if he chooses, may rest in the lower sense, and maintain it on undeniable exegetical grounds. The spiritually-minded reader finds something more—something which alone comes up to the splendour of the style, and without which the hyperbole, beautiful as it is, would seem tumid and extravagant. It is a *mounting sense*, as we may call it, rather than a "*double*" or enigmatical representation. The lower is the basis, undoubtedly, but we cannot rest in it. As elsewhere, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, the earthly salvation is described in terms and figures powerfully suggestive of higher spiritual realities. The exegesis, therefore, that comes from this is not arbitrary. To the mind in spiritual harmony, it seems to be the only one that truly satisfies the emotional glow and fervour of the language. The mirage of this world in the highest reality it can claim—still more the mirage our "vain imaginations" create in it—is worse than the dry desert itself; its delusions, when discovered, produce more pain; the disappointment intensifies the thirst. Hence the exceeding impressiveness of the prophet's figure when rightly understood. The unreal shall vanish; truth, substance, eternal reality shall take the place of all that is false. Man shall cease "walking in a vain show" (*betselem*), an image, a shadow (Ps. xxxix. 6). This mirage of time shall become a fountain of *real* water, of "*living water*, springing up to everlasting life." "With joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isa. xii. 3).

"The shadows are gone, truth has come." Mohammed seems to have, in some way, caught a spark from the prophetic inspiration, when he represents the righteous saying this, as they lift up their heads in the morning of the resurrection. In the Arabic, as in the Hebrew, the power comes from the graphic mode which both languages possess, in so high a degree, of picturing the future in the present, and even in the past. "Joy and triumph *are* overtaking them, sorrow and sighing *have fled* away." This is not the land of reality. The idea comes down from the pilgrim language of the patriarchs, who so pathetically declared themselves to be but "travellers and sojourners upon the earth." They were looking for "the better country," the *real* home, the "city which hath foundations," firm and everlasting. Something of the same idea, and from the same early source, perhaps, may be traced in the most ancient Arabian poets who lived before the days of Mohammed. From them he most probably borrowed the strikingly similar figure we find in the Koran (Sura xxiv. 29), entitled "Light." It has the same word (*sharab*), and in other respects is immediately suggestive of the passage in Isaiah: "As for the unbelieving, their works are like the *sarab*, the mirage of the plain. The thirsty traveller thinks there is water there; but lo, he comes and finds it nothing." The latter parts remind us of the description in Job vi. 17, which may be cited, too, as one of the examples of its Arabian imagery. It is a picture of the thirsty traveller sustained by the hope of finding the refreshing wady stream; but instead of the imagined reality, nothing meets the eye but the dried-up bed whose waters have vanished, "gone up to *tohu*," the formless void, as the Hebrew so graphically expresses it

"What time they shrink deserted of their springs,
As quenched in heat they vanish from their place;
'Tis then their wonted ways are turned aside:
Their streams are lost, gone up in emptiness.
The caravans of Tema look for them;
The companies of Sheba hope in vain;
Confounded are they where they once did trust;
They reach the spot and stand in helpless maze."

Another very striking passage, where the same word is used, may be found in the Koran (Sura lxxviii. 20): "When the hills are set in motion, and become like the sarab"—the vanishing mirage. It is a description of the day of judgment, when the world will be found to have been a sarab, a departing dream. Or

it may represent its exceeding transitoriness, like that other name *ajalun*, the *rolling, hastening, passing* world, which the Koran and the early Arabian poets give to this present mundane system as compared with the reality of Paradise. Hence the word *sarab* becomes a common or proverbial expression, *pro re evanida*, for anything light, transient, and unsubstantial. There is a beautiful allusion to it in the very ancient poem of Lebid (*Moallaka de Lebid, De Sacy's ed.*, p. 294). See also the account of the phenomenon as given by Diodorus Siculus, lib. iii. ch. 50. It differs, however, from the picture usually presented by the Arabian poets, in that the appearances are those of animals and wild beasts, rather than of rivers and fountains. The particular kind of phantoms, however, would depend very much on the kind of imagination possessed by the travellers, and the circumstances by which it was excited. It is, in any way, an apt representation of a delusive world, whether in its images of terror or of attraction. That the word is thus frequently used in the Arabic, and that it corresponds well to its ancient Hebrew etymology, is sufficient to warrant us in thus interpreting the idea the prophet so impressively sets forth.—*Tayler Lewis.*

The Exiles' Return.

xxxv. 8–10. *And an highway shall be there, &c.*

The chapter of which these words are a part testifies of Christ. The prophet, while foretelling in it the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, is enabled to look forward to a more spiritual and much greater deliverance. With the eye of faith he sees the kingdom of the Messiah established in the earth, and beholds Him open a new and blessed road by which a multitude of the enslaved and perishing escape from their miseries and are led to His kingdom. This prophecy calls upon us to consider—1. The travellers of whom it speaks; 2. The way along which they are journeying; 3. The home to which it is leading them.—*Charles Bradley: Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 127, 128.

Whatever primary reference this prophecy might have to the return of the tribes from captivity, it is evident that all its interesting and beautiful descriptions can only be fully realised in the blessedness and glory of the Gospel dispensation. Consider it as spiritually referring to the Gospel way of salvation.

I. The way itself.

A religious course is often spoken of as a way (Prov. xv. 21; Jer. xxi. 8; Matt. vii. 14). The way of which our text speaks is described—1. *As a highway.* It is not a secluded private path, but a public highway opened by the authority of the King of kings; a way designed for the general accommodation of the human race, and leading to the metropolis of the universe. 2. *It is a holy way.* 3. *It is a plain way.* Not a way requiring extensive philosophical knowledge or deep metaphysical research to comprehend it. All the Gospel requirements and duties are plain. 4. *It is a safe way* (α). Satan may try to allure us from it, but he cannot interrupt us while walking in it.

II. The character of its travellers.

"The redeemed," &c. 1. *Once they were slaves.* Slaves of sin and Satan. 2. *They have been redeemed.* By the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Redeemed to God; redeemed from sin, the power of Satan, and the wrath to come. 3. *They are now the Lord's freemen.* Now sons, members of the Divine family; sharers of the Divine goodness and peace; and they bear a holy resemblance to their Elder Brother.

III. How they travel along it.

"They shall return and come to Zion with songs." 1. They sing the praises of their great Deliverer (Rev. i. 5, 6). 2. They sing on account of the deliverance itself. 3. They sing on account of the joys of their present experience. 4. They sing on account of their glorious prospects.

IV. The blessedness to which it leads them.

1. They shall be crowned with joy. 2. They shall possess a perfect ful-

ness of felicity. 3. Their felicity shall be uninterrupted and eternal.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.: Four Hundred Sketches and Skeletons of Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 160–163.

(a.) This is important in our own country, where there are no ferocious animals lying in wait to destroy; but it was peculiarly important in Judæa and the countries adjoining it. Many parts of these are said to have been infested with beasts of prey, which frequently rushed from their places of concealment upon the passing traveller, and rendered even the public roads exceedingly dangerous. Hence the prophet says of the way to heaven through Christ, that "no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast go up thereon; it shall not be found there." Not that we are to conclude that the redeemed have no foes to combat, and no difficulties to surmount in their course. Like the Israelites returning from Babylon, they have to pass through an enemy's country in their journey to Zion. But He who has redeemed them accompanies them in their pilgrimage; and though they are called to struggle and fight, He gives them the victory, and renders their path as safe as though there were no dangers near it, nor any to hurt and destroy.—*Bradley.*

The Road to the City.

xxxv. 8–10. *And a highway shall be there, &c.*

Human life is a journey—a journey to the grave. The Christian life is a journey—a journey to a better country. Abraham journeyed to the land of Canaan; Israel in the wilderness; their descendants on the return from Babylon (Ezra viii. 31). If you would reach your destination, it is necessary to know and traverse the way.

I. **It is a way easily known.** Some are difficult to find. They are crossed and intersected so often, and so imperfectly supplied with guiding-posts, that mistakes are almost inevitable. This is a way in which "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err." Serious mistake is almost impossible. You have a directory so clear that reference to it settles every question. God's Word is the guide of life. He may read who runs. It is true there are difficulties in the Bible. But there are no difficulties in the ascertainment of the way of life. The road the child travels to his home is quite plain and easy, yet he may be ignorant of the means by which it was made, the materials of which it is constructed, the sources whence they were obtained, the engineering appliances by which they are bound together, the quarters from which the cost was defrayed. At present he has no information, or it is beyond his comprehension. Thus in the Bible there are many things difficult and beyond the present knowledge of the student. They diminish with advancing knowledge and thought. And even if they remain, they do not affect the matters on which certainty is necessary. The way of forgiveness through the Saviour's death is written with the clearness of a sunbeam. The rule of life in its application to all circumstances is so clearly laid down that all cases in the court of conscience find an easy settlement; where there is a disposition to follow it, no practical difficulty exists. It is like the pillar of cloud and fire which infallibly guided the children of Israel in the wilderness.

II. **It is a purified way.** "The unclean shall not pass over it." It is a holy way. The text fastens attention on those who traverse the road as giving it its character. They are holy persons in the company of holy persons. What is holiness? It is separation, setting apart, purity, always with reference to God. 1. Its meaning is not covered by morality. That term is ordinarily met by the performance of the duties that arise between man and man. 2. Nor is the meaning of the term "holy" covered by humanity. We hear much of what is called "the religion of humanity," which means a benevolent desire for the well-being of mankind. Like morality, it is to be commended as far as it goes. It is, indeed, a step in advance of morality. It is a man's

worldly interest to practise its virtues. Humanity rises higher. It looks beyond self. In proportion as a man looks out from himself to the well-being of others, he is ennobled. Holiness includes them both, but they do not necessarily include holiness. They terminate in man, whereas holiness is in immediate relation to God. It is the separation of a man's nature from all sin against God, and is consecration to Him. God brings a sinner under the power of His grace, and a saint emerges. The love of God in Christ, which pardons him, so influences his nature that he comes into sympathy with God, and desires to be like Him. He makes the divine will the rule of his life. He is born anew. He is holy in heart. His growing practical obedience to the Divine authority is his walk in the way of holiness. Those who have not experienced such a change cannot walk in it. They tire. Holiness of heart precedes holiness of life (H. E. I. 2813–2817).

III. **It is a pleasant way.** There are pilgrim songs. The walk through the country may be so pleasant that nothing is thought of its difficulty or its fatigue. The way of holiness is rendered pleasant by congenial companions, by Divine thoughts, by heavenly communings. There are difficulties. The way is sometimes steep; here and there are formidable obstructions. There are temptations to weariness and abandonment of the way. Yet the difficulties are not insurmountable. They disappear before the traveller's sanctified determination. The ability of anything to give pleasure depends on our feeling in relation to it. Especially in things of a moral nature. The regenerated nature of a Christian makes every step of his progress a source of pleasure. Christians are the happiest of men, partly because happiness is not sought as their main end (H. E. I. 1080–1084, 4161–4163).

And it is safe as it is pleasant. All pleasant paths are not safe. Some pleasant ones are extremely perilous. The Lord of the way has cleared it of dangers. "He will keep the feet of His saints." "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon."

IV. **It is a completed way.** Some roads lead to nothing. They abruptly terminate, and you must retrace your steps. This is continued to the destination. "They shall come to Zion." As the Jews reached the earthly Jerusalem we shall arrive in heaven. The holy city a fit termination of the holy way.

Are you in the way? Keep in it. Turn not aside. Advance toward your destination. Anticipate arrival.

Are you not in the way? Consider whither you are going. Renounce the world. Enter the road. Do not say it is hard. Do not say you cannot encounter the difficulties. God will help.—*J. Rawlinson.*

There are a thousand wrong roads, but only one right one. 1. The road of the text is *the King's highway.* It spans all the chasms of human wretchedness; it tunnels all the mountains of earthly difficulty; it is wide and strong enough to hold all the millions of the human race. The King sent His Son to build the road. He put head, and hand, and heart to it, and after it was completed cried, "It is finished." 2. It is spoken of as a *clean road.* "The unclean shall not pass over it" (Prov. xiv. 12; Heb. xii. 14). 3. *A plain road.* "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." The pardon is plain. The peace is plain (1 Tim. i. 15). If you are saved, it will be as a little child (Matt. xviii. 3). 4. *A safe road.* "No lion shall be there," &c. His soul is safe. His reputation is safe (Ps. cxxv. 2). 5. *A pleasant road.* God gives a bond of indemnity against all evil to every man that treads it (Rom. viii. 28; Matt. vi. 26, 28; Prov. iii. 33; 1 Cor. x. 13). He enables him to be glad with a great joy (Ps. xxvii. 1; Rev. vii. 14, 16, 17; Exod. xv. 1). 6. *What is its terminus?* "The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion."

Zion was the King's palace, a mountain fastness, impregnable. Heaven is the fastness of the universe. And Jesus is there!—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.: Christian Age*, vol. ix. pp. 3–5.

The Happiness of Heaven.

xxxv. 10. *And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, &c.*

"Zion," literally speaking, was the proper name of the city where David dwelt (2 Sam. v. 7). But the name was also given to the ancient Jewish polity in church and state (Ps. cii. 13, 16), to the Gospel Church, with all the spiritual blessings of the Christian dispensation (Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7); and also to the Church in glory, or the heavenly state of final and complete happiness with God and Christ for ever (Heb. xii. 22, &c.) We may therefore regard this text as revealing *the general features of the happiness of heaven.*

I. **To whom does the hope of heaven belong?** To "the ransomed of the Lord," whom He has delivered from bondage and is bringing back from exile (H. E. I. 2730, 2829–2832).

II. **How do those who attain to heaven come there?** Triumphantly, "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." This is said perhaps with allusion to the ovations of victorious chiefs, or to troops coming home from hard-fought fields and the privations even of a successful campaign, crowned with garlands and waving palms, singing some martial air, and approaching their homes and families with shouts of gratulation.

III. **What do the redeemed realise when they reach heaven?** "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." In heaven — 1. There will be *an entire cessation of every occasion of grief* (H. E. I. 1629; P. D. 1753, 1767). 2. *There will no longer be any possibility of falling.* What a blessed peace will spring from this fact! In this world the sincerest believers, like pilots steering into port through narrow and winding channels beset with sunken rocks and hidden shoals, must work out daily their own salvation with fear and trembling (1 Cor. ix. 27). But in heaven the spirits of the just are "made perfect," and, like God Himself, "cannot be tempted of evil." 3. *We shall meet again with our long-lost loved ones, never more to part* (Rev. vii. 15–17; P. D. 2996–2998). 4. *The companionship of saints and angels.* The best and purest friendships here are often marred by the blots and blemishes of good men; but there will be no jarring in the exalted fellowships of heaven. 5. *The possession of Christ and the beatific vision of God for ever* (1 Pet. i. 8; Isa. xxxiii. 7).—*R. Bingham, M.A.: Sermons*, pp. 128–149.

The Banishment of Sorrow.

xxxv. 10. *And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, &c.*

I. "They shall obtain joy and gladness," &c.—**this is undoubtedly the distinctive and ineradicable hope of human nature.** Is that hope a glorious, and perhaps in its effects a beneficent, delusion never to be realised? Or is it the earnest of a reality far greater than its highest imagination can conceive? The question receives contradictory answers from the two conflicting voices within the soul, as from time to time one or other gains a temporary predominance. But the Christian revelation allows no doubt on this matter for a moment, and yet it does not bid us shut our eyes to the darker phases of actual life. The picture drawn in this chapter deals with every sphere of human life. It begins with the outward: it tells how the

"desert shall rejoice," &c.; it turns, then, to the lower nature of man himself—"the eyes of the blind shall be opened," &c.; lastly, it speaks to the spirit of man: the light of God shows a "highway through the desert of life" on which "the redeemed can walk" safely; and at the end there is a heavenly Zion of perfection, to which the "ransomed of the Lord shall come with songs," &c.

II. **When did the prophet look to see his vision fulfilled?** He may well have thought first of the all but present deliverance from the gigantic power of Assyria by the redeeming arm of the Lord. Some such shadow of fulfilment there may have been, in the last gleam of unclouded prosperity which ever fell upon Judah, before its sun set in the great captivity: such shadows of fulfilment may have been felt in the history of man again and again. Isaiah unquestionably looked on to the kingdom of the Messiah as the one ideal of a perfect manifestation of God and a perfect exaltation of man. Such fulfilment Christ claimed for Himself; but it is in the actual manifestation of the kingdom of Christ on earth that the prophetic picture is realised in its fulness.

III. **If the kingdom of Christ is what it proclaims itself to be, it must necessarily be, as on the Mount He proclaimed it, a kingdom of blessing.** What are the two great sources of the sorrow which broods over life? 1. Over our bodily life, and the world of nature which subserves it, there is *the blight of pain and suffering*. 2. *Spiritual evil*—the blindness, weakness, sin of man himself. How does the Gospel profess to face and scatter both? By the revelation of the Cross it hallows doubly the law of suffering and death, by overruling it to good for ourselves, and by making it a condition and a means of helping the redemption of others. The Gospel deals still more decisively with the burden of sin: in this lies the essence of its redemption "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. . . . We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This is its first message; but it is not all: "Sin," it goes on to say, "shall not have dominion over you." "Ye are sanctified in Christ Jesus."

IV. **But is that promise actually realised?** We answer boldly, Yes. It must be remembered that by the very nature of the case the kingdom of Christ is seen by us, as yet, only in the first stages of its conflict against the powers of evil. What it can offer, as yet, is a true but only imperfect earnest of the future. In all the three phases of this prophecy, Christ asserted its power to bless the whole world. He held the reins of the forces of Nature; lifted the burden of disease and resisted death; brought in the new life of His grace. He had joy, like no other joy, amid His continuous conflict with evil; and to those who were His, He gave peace in proportion as they entered into His spirit. The last conflict was but for a moment, the chill of dreariness before the dawn. "Then," amidst some fear, and awe, and perplexity, "were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord." It is, thank God! a matter of daily Christian experience, that, just in proportion as we are really Christ's, the promise is realised again and again to us. There is joy in nature, and a deeper joy and peace in communion with God. Sometimes we feel that these things are the only reality in a fleeting and unsubstantial world around us. But this reality is yet imperfect; sorrow and sighing are rather kept at bay than driven away; but we have a sure and certain hope of a perfect future. Without the realisation of His peace in the present, without the sure and certain hope of the future, one hardly sees how man can care to live; one dares not think how he can die.—*Canon Barry, D.D.: Christian Age*, vol. xx. pp. 81–83.

MODERN RABSHAKEHS, AND THEIR ATTEMPTS TO TERRIFY GOD'S PEOPLE INTO A HUMBLE SURRENDER.

xxxvi. 4. *What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?*

Sennacherib is surprised at the attitude of resistance taken by Hezekiah, and sends an embassy to dissuade him from his mad project. When they appear outside the walls, some officers of Hezekiah's court come out to confer with them, and Rabshakeh opens upon them with the taunting question, "*What confidence,*" *&c* The proud king of Assyria had another end beyond that of conquest. His aim was to show that Jehovah was on a level with the gods of the nations. This was, therefore, a religious war. Every country he subdued was another god overcome, and if only Jerusalem were taken, his triumph would be complete. *The situation here described is an image of the Christian faith assailed by modern unbelief.* The forces of infidelity have become bold and insolent. The Bible is subjected to the hostile criticism of men who would rejoice to see it overthrown. Unbelief is marshalling her forces against the citadel of revealed truth. She has on her side some prominent leaders of modern thought, and employs both press and lecture-room for accomplishing her destructive designs. If she can only get the Christian faith out of the way, the world will be her own. Our modern Rabshakehs are hurling against us the taunting question, "*What confidence,*" *&c.*

I. **What is this confidence of ours which is so assailed**

The question implies that we *have* a confidence. Our opponents admit it, though to them it is inexplicable. They are forced to bear testimony to a strange but courageous faith by which we are supported in life and death. Jerusalem had nothing to rest on but God's presence and promise. Their king had encouraged them with the noble words of 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8. Here is the secret of the confidence which so surprised the Assyrian king; and on the same ground do we take our stand against the opposing hosts of unbelief. God's presence and faithfulness are the bulwarks behind which we may safely entrench ourselves. We have believed God's Word and have taken shelter in Christ (Phil. iii. 3). On His exalted throne He is directing the Church's energies, restraining her enemies, and giving success to her enterprises.

II. **What assaults are made upon our confidence?**

They correspond to those by which Rabshakeh tried to subvert Hezekiah's confidence. He puts the question in a contemptuous tone, and then proceeds to answer it, and to show that the confidence cherished had no solid basis. 1. He points to *the slenderness of Hezekiah's resources* (vers. 5, 6, 8, 9). "The Egyptians can no more be relied on than the frail reeds that grow on the banks of their Nile. No help can come from abroad; and see how weak you are in yourselves. If you can find riders, I will supply 2000 horses." How could such a puny kingdom withstand the power of Assyria with its magnificent military equipment? So unbelief tries to undermine faith, not knowing that God's strength is perfected in human weakness. Cardinal Cajetan tried to browbeat Luther,—"Do you think that your electors will take up arms for you? I tell you, no; and where then will you be?" The brave answer was, "Then, as now, in the hands of God." 2. Rabshakeh tries to *close the door of Divine help* (ver. 7). "How can you expect support from a God whose worship you have suppressed?" But this was a needful reform, for these rural places of worship had degenerated into scenes of idolatry. So the enemies of the faith in our day try to make capital out of the changes and reforms that have taken place. They point to our eccle-

siastical divisions and theological controversies as an argument against us. "How can that be true about which there is so much diversity of opinion? How can Divine help be expected to defend the Christian faith, when there are so many sects and parties, disestablishment agitations, and ecclesiastical rivalries?" We answer that there is a unity among all who love the Lord Jesus, and however much we may deplore the need of change and reform, we are not to be deterred from effecting them by any fear of God's displeasure. It can never offend God to maintain His truth and worship in all their purity (H. E. I. 1372–1374). 3. Another reason for surrender is urged in ver. 10, where the Assyrian *claims to be commissioned by God* to destroy the land. This was only a piece of bluster intended to alarm Jerusalem. It has its counterpart in our day in those men of science, who come to us in the name of God with the truths they have discovered, and throw them in our face as inconsistent with faith in the Scriptures. But there can be no real disagreement between science and revelation. We are not going to open our gates to arrogant scientists who claim that their department embraces everything; to materialists who tell us that our heaven is six feet below the ground. Let science keep to its legitimate sphere. It was a good remark made by Professor Ball to a lady who put to him some questions about comets, to each of which he replied, "I do not know." "Then," she said, "may I ask what is the use of your science?" "To let me know, madam," he replied, "that I cannot know some things" (H. E. I. 538, 539). 4. Rabshakeh presses a surrender in view of *the hardships the people would have to endure.* He threatens them with famine and thirst, and (vers. 16, 17) promises them ease and plenty if they will but suppress the sentiment of patriotism, abandon their confidence, and give up their city into his hands. This is an old and well-used device to make the believer cower in the face of trials and privations. But the men of faith are proof against such selfish considerations. They will fight the Lord's battles at whatever cost; for however hard their outward lot may be, they have inward joys which more than counterbalance the loss of all things. 5. The last argument which Rabshakeh employed is this (vers. 18–20): *Other gods were unable to defend their worshippers against his victorious march, and why should the Lord be able to defend Jerusalem?* This was his last thrust, and was intended to bring home to the people the utter baselessness of their confidence. This reasoning is not unlike the patronising tone in which infidels speak of the Christian religion, as one of the many superstitions, all well enough for their day, but now effete, or destined to perish before the advance of intelligence; as one of those venerable systems, all of which are now losing their hold on the intellect and heart.

III. Why should we still hold to our Christian confidence in spite of these attempts to overthrow it?

The agnosticism and infidelity which in our time are so loud and pretentious are only systems of negation; they have no substitute for that which they endeavour to destroy. If we allow them to rob us of our faith, we are spiritually bankrupt, for these destructive agencies have nothing to satisfy the heart and conscience. Never let us lower our flag for all their threats and boastful arrogance. Perhaps the best way to deal with them is that which was followed by Hezekiah's officers (ver. 21; Matt. vii. 6).

IV. What will be the end of all the assaults made upon the Christian faith?

We know what came of the boastful insolence of Rabshakeh. Not only did he fail to unhinge the confidence of Hezekiah, but he brought upon himself confusion and defeat. God answered his blasphemies. God employs the hostile efforts of unbelief to confirm us in our confidence. What our enemies intend for the subversion of the truth only places it on a more solid basis. Christianity can never

suffer from the most rigid investigation, for this only reveals its immovable strength. We throw back on our opponents their own question, "What confidence have you, what light in the dark lonesome hour of death?" Oh, the strange "credulity of unbelief," which accepts the most glaring fallacies, whose reason is clouded by a proud and insolent defiance of God! We have nothing to fear, then, from the boastful Rabshakehs of our day. The assaults to which our faith is now subjected are nothing new. Old weapons are refurbished, old stratagems resorted to; but it has survived attacks as clever as those now made upon it (H. E. I. 1165).

CONCLUSION.—Let me put to you the question in a different tone with all affection and anxiety for your spiritual welfare. It is good to have our position assailed that we may see its strength (H. E. I. 1138–1139). Is yours a confidence that can resist the thrusts and subtle reasonings and plausible solicitations of the world? The best answer you can give to the insolence of unbelief is to hold your peace, and go quietly forward in resolute faith and persistent well-doing, giving not the answer of the lip, but of the life—a life nourished, strengthened, and beautified by faith in Christ. —*William Guthrie, M.A.*

IN WHOM ART THOU TRUSTING?

xxxvi. 5. . . . . *Now on whom dost thou trust?*

The question is important in ordinary life, but it is overwhelmingly so in spiritual things.

I. A LITTLE BUNDLE OF ANSWERS.

1. "I do not know that I have thought about the matter; I have left the matter of dying, and of eternity, and of judgment out of my consideration." How foolish! There are more gates to death than you dream of. Have not you walked with dying men? Suppose you were sure of a long life, why delay being happy? Christ says of the rich man in hell, "He lift up his eyes." He might and should have done so before, but he said, "Tell my brethren." 2. "I thank God I am about as good as most people." Company in being ruined will not decrease, but rather increase the catastrophe. You are trusting in yourself. But is conscience quiet? Only the absolutely perfect man can be saved by his own works. 3. "I trust in my priest." Has any priest grace to spare for you? You are, or may be, as much a priest as any man can be; Christians are "a royal priesthood." 4. "Well, God is merciful." You are trusting in the mercy of God; but, as you state it, you are trusting in what you will never find. If you go to God out of Christ, you will find Him to be a consuming fire; instead of mercy you shall receive justice (H. E. I. 2316–2317, 2349–2350). 5. "Well, I do not say that I can trust to my works, but I am a good-hearted man." There is much truth in the saying, "If it is bad at the top, it is worse at the bottom; and if it is not good on the surface, it will never pay for getting at it" (Jer. xvii. 9; H. E. I. 2669–2680).

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S ANSWER.

I trust a triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I trust to the Father's choosing me; to the Son, as my Redeemer, Intercessor, my resurrection, and life; to the Holy Spirit, to save me from my inbred sins, to sanctify me wholly.

To some men this does not look like a real trust. "We cannot see God; how do we know all this about the Trinity?" Cannot you trust in a thousand things you have never seen or heard? You have never seen electricity nor gravity. Those that have trusted in God find Him to be as real as if they could see Him. "Can we prove that God interferes to help His people?" Yes, He hears prayer. A Christian is sometimes asked whether

he has a right to trust God. He has God's promise to help him. "Is He worthy to be trusted?" He has proved Himself faithful and true. The Christian commends God to others in saying that he feels he can rest upon Him for the future.

III. SOME WORDS OF ADVICE TO THOSE WHO ARE TRUSTING.

1. *Drive out all unbelief.* With such a God to trust to, let us trust with all our might. It is an insult to Him to doubt Him. The devil calls God a liar, but it is hard if a man's own child is to think ill of his father. We are verily guilty in speaking hard things of our God. 2. *Seek the Holy Spirit's help.* We have often said we would not doubt again, yet we have Let us ask to be strengthened. We often forget that the Author of our faith must be the Finisher of it also. 3. Try to *bring others to trust* where we have trusted (John i. 40–42, 45). 4. Love Him who thus gives Himself to be trusted by us. The sister graces ever live together. Show your love. 4. We must *prove our faith by our works.* Let us do more for God. "No day without a deed." Cease working and you will soon cease believing.—*C. H. Spurgeon: Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. xi. pp. 469–480.

HEZEKIAH'S PRUDENT SILENCE.

xxxvi. 21. *But they held their peace, &c.*

Dr. Geikie says of Hezekiah, "Ready for war when necessary, and alike brave and skilful in its conduct, he was more inclined to the gentle arts of peace." Among these "gentle arts" should be reckoned his cultivated gift of prudence. Prudence is undervalued by some, as not taking rank among the higher virtues, and even sometimes decried as essentially selfish. But prudence guards the life of the highest virtue, and thus becomes of almost equal importance with it. Prudence is short for "providence;" "the provident man," as the phrase is used, shows prudence in one direction, and is praised for it. Greater praise is surely due to the all-round prudent man. Prudence in man is, in one aspect, but the counterpart of providence in God, and those who are given to esteem it lightly are not pious, like Hezekiah, but already doubters of, and disbelievers in, the general and special providence of God, or likely to become so (P. D. 2914).

It is prudent to be silent—1. *When the judgment, based upon the knowledge of available facts, dictates silence as sound policy.* Silence may, and often does, imply something quite different from a wisely calculated policy; it may indicate abject fear, cowardice, indifference. All silence is not "golden;" sometimes the basest metal goes to its composition. The order to be silent, whether addressed by Hezekiah to his ambassadors, or to the people generally, or to both, may be conjectured to have sprung from the king's desperate case. But even if we leave out this element, enough remains to justify the command, "Answer him not." It may be presumed that the messenger of the "great king," "dressed in a little brief authority," conducted himself as Hezekiah *foresaw* he would, outdoing Sennacherib himself in blasphemy and all impiety. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself." Hezekiah did this in the most literal sense, and his command to all concerned was to hide the spirit of their mind behind a veil of silence. Such prudence, then, is more than foresight, it is foresight connecting itself with a certain course of action as the wisest or best possible in certain given circumstances (P. D. 3086, 3089). How rare is such prudence! Not from evil intent, but through want of thought, do many persist in running their heads against adamant. Available knowledge is neglected, and judgment, where there is any in such a case, is adrift and mistaken.

2. *When the deepest feelings are agitated so as to be beyond immediate control.* Hezekiah's ambassadors obeyed their orders until Rabshakeh uttered words the effect of which upon the people there was good reason to dread (ver. 10); then they broke in, carried on a great wave of impulse (ver. 11); but only to make the blasphemer more arrogantly insolent. Feeling, like fire, is a good servant but a bad master; it is blind, and blindly seeks its own objects. Only in the most highly educated moral natures can it ever be expected to flow in proper channels; but in none should it be intrusted with the reins of government. "I will keep my mouth with a bridle," said the Psalmist, "while the wicked is before me" (cf. James i. 19, 20, 26).

3. *When wise counsel is at hand* (xxxvii. 1, 2). "Hezekiah went into the house of the Lord;" "and he sent Eliakim unto Isaiah the prophet." There is a kind of piety which disdains human aid, because each man may go direct to God. This may not have wrought so much harm in the world as the Romish doctrine of mediators, but it is equally mistaken. Blessed is the man who knows of a prophet—a brother-man of spiritual insight, moral integrity, and Christian courtesy—before whom he can lay his case! Thrice blessed he who, knowing such an one, can hold his peace until he has sought and obtained the Heaven-provided help! God may well hold us insincere if we go to Him and neglect His servants' aid.

CONCLUSION. — Let us hear and understand the words of the preacher: "There is a time to keep silence," as well as "a time to speak." We are lacking in silence and reserve. Silence is a glorious temple, but in it there are few worshippers. Be it ours to wait and worship there!

The worshippers find the very walls translucent, the rays of heaven descend in unbroken brightness there. Silence is the birthplace of the world's progress, and from the rays of truth that flash into it are born the grand visions of the prophets of God, and kingly purposes too; and from these are forged the weapons with which men shall sweep away the hindrances to all wisdom.—*J. Macrae Simcock.*

A FOOLISH KING AND A WISE ONE.

xxxvii. 1. *And it came to pass, &c.*

The message to which our text refers was sent by a foolish king to a wise one. Look at them both.

I. THE FOOLISH KING.

Sennacherib. Ignorant of God, he fell into various follies. 1. *Pride and arrogance.* Unaware that he was but an instrument in the hand of God (chap. x. 5–7), he imagined that his triumphs were due entirely to his military genius and the power under his control. Blind as to the true nature of his past career, he looked into the future with boastful confidence; he had no doubt that he would go on conquering and to conquer. His proud survey of the past and this arrogant outlook into the future are follies repeated by many men much smaller than Sennacherib. But every wise man will remember that he owes all his past successes to God (Deut. viii. 10–18), and that all his future is absolutely in the hand of God (James iv. 13–15). 2. *Blasphemous undervaluing of the power of God* (vers. 18–20). He therefore imagines that God's people are in his hand. On this account he presents to them a curious reason why they should surrender (chap. xxxvi. 16, 17). He promises them a quiet possession of their own vines, which they possessed already but for his disturbance; and in the same breath he adds, "Until I come and take you away;" and then, to soften that sentence, he promises to take them to a land like their own. He promises them no more, after all, than they had already on the safe tenure of their own laws.

This reason for surrender was either a mockery of men whom he believed incapable of resisting him, or an indication of the mental weakness into which pride was betraying him. Ere long there was a terrible demonstration of his folly (ch. xxxvii. 36, P. D. 3413), an appalling fulfilment of the prediction concerning him (ch. x. 12–19).

II. THE WISE KING.

Hezekiah. His disposition does not appear to more advantage in any passage of life, nor his conduct exhibit lessons more generally useful, than in the circumstances to which our text alludes. A message is brought from a proud invader; threats mixed with blasphemies are sounded in his ears; a force far superior to his own draws near to his city. In his extremity he sought help, not from man, but from God. In drawing near to God, he testifies his *penitence* for his own sins and the sins of the people by rending his garments and covering himself with sackcloth, the usual tokens of sorrow in the East; his *faith* and *hope* by resorting to the house of God, his accustomed place of prayer. Observe the wisdom of the order of his procedure. 1. He began with demonstrations of repentance. He knew well that without repentance there could be no hope towards God. (1.) This is the true order for individuals (H. E. I. 145–147). (2.) For the Church of God. 2. Beginning with repentance, he could cherish hope (vers. 2–4). Why? He felt that the Lord would not permit Sennacherib's words to pass unpunished; and that, if the sins of the people did not operate to prevent it, help would surely be sent him. But he spoke with caution, "it may be," &c. The best reasons may be found for what we call "delays" in providential helps. There was room for expectation that help would be given, room for prayer that it might be given, but no room for overweening confidence that it must be so. With his hope there was mingled submission to the will of God, and that doubtless helped to win for his prayer a favourable hearing.

CONCLUSION.—This narrative presents us with the results, on the one hand, of pride and arrogance; and on the other, of repentance and an humbled spirit. In times of extremity let us not entertain hope without an humble and repentant suit to God; and when that ground of penitence is laid for its support, let us not dismiss our confidence. God is always able to help His people. Like Hezekiah, then, to Him let us resort in every time of trouble, whether it be a time of public danger or of domestic affliction.—*J. H. Pott: Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 282–299.

A KING IN TROUBLE.

xxxvii. 14. *And Hezekiah received the letter, &c.*

The armies of Assyria had overthrown the cities of Phœnicia and Philistia. Samaria had fallen. Many of the strongholds of Judah had been destroyed. Hezekiah attempted to turn aside the tide of war by sending a tribute to the conqueror. Like all compromises of unbelief, this act of submission resulted in increased trial. Sennacherib did not desire to make peace with Hezekiah. To have left Jerusalem unsubdued as he advanced towards Egypt would have been impolitic and unsafe. So he determined to destroy it, and sent a letter full of boastful arrogance, threats, blasphemy, false insinuations, and insults to its king.

I. HEZEKIAH'S TROUBLE.

1. Kings cannot escape trouble. Storms howl on mountain-tops when sunshine gilds the plains (H. E. I. 47; P. D. 2142, 2143). 2. Neither does piety prevent trouble. If it were an absolute evil, the righteous would escape it; but it is often an angel in disguise stooping to serve them. The best need discipline. The pious are often more benefited by trouble than by joy (H. E. I. 116–142). 3. Trouble may arise, not from our own wrong-

doings, but from the wrong-doing of others. Sennacherib's lawless ambition then troubled the whole earth. God uses evil even to discipline His saints. He knew what Hezekiah needed, and used Sennacherib to discipline him (H. E. I. 85). 4. Great troubles may be conveyed to us by insignificant means. A letter only was received; but who can tell what trouble a letter may convey? 5. Hezekiah's trouble was great. It included—(1.) *The threatened loss of his kingdom.* He saw before him the loss of all his greatness and honour. (2.) *Threatened captivity or death.* (3.) *Possible demolition of the royal city.* Jerusalem was dear to every Jew. Especially so to Hezekiah, who had fortified and beautified it. (4.) *The ruin and exile of his people.* (5.) *The dishonour of Jehovah.* Sennacherib had insulted God. If Jerusalem were taken, His holy and beautiful house would be profaned, His glory tarnished, and His worship, which had been lately restored, obliterated from the earth.

II. HEZEKIAH'S REFUGE.

All men have not a Divine refuge in trouble. The irreligious cannot rush into the sheltering arms of God. Hezekiah had done all that a wise monarch could do to defend his city (2 Chron. xxxii. 1–8), and after this he committed his way to God. Fanaticism despises means, but true faith uses them, and then soars above them to rest in omnipotence. 1. *Hezekiah sought God, his refuge, in the Temple.* For the spiritual training of a people who were to be God's witnesses to the end of time, God's presence was more especially revealed there. Special promises were given to those who prayed there. Moreover, it was Hezekiah's accustomed place of prayer. Helpful memories often crowd around us in places where we have prayed, and bear us up, as upon eagles' wings, into the Divine presence. 2. *He would set a good example to the nation.* He would lead his people to seek God in that day of trouble. 3. *He would publicly manifest his confidence in God's power to protect and save.* His faith found expression in an act which honoured God and quickened His people's confidence in Him. He spread the letter before the Lord. A most significant act—a prayer in action. Probably done in solemn silence, words afterwards rising to his lips. He would not answer this letter, but would leave it with God to answer it. Many letters might better be left with God than answered. If enemies threaten us, let us make God our refuge, and our deliverance also will be sure (P. D. 779).

Learn—1. So to live as to have those troubles only which come to us by Divine appointment. 2. In the greatest of these troubles never to despair of Divine help, but to expect it. 3. To be pious in prosperity, that when adversity comes we may have God for our refuge (H. E. I. 3877–3879).—*W. Osborne Lilley: The Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. pp. 389–391.

The conduct of Hezekiah recited here teaches us *our first duty and best resource in any emergency.* Sennacherib had captured all the defenced cities of Judah, and at length, determining to attack Jerusalem, he sent a taunting, boastful, threatening letter to Hezekiah, reminding him of the Assyrian conquests, and warning him against a vain confidence in the help of his God. This letter Hezekiah spread before the Lord in earnest prayer. The sequel shows how wisely he acted, and a consolatory message was sent by Isaiah to Hezekiah. Sennacherib was not allowed to shoot an arrow against Jerusalem; his army was destroyed, and he was compelled to return ignominiously to his own land, where he shortly afterwards perished. Here we have an example that should be followed by any one harassed, irritated, alarmed.

1. *Sorrowful ones*, take note of it. In this world there is much to trouble, harass, annoy us, but we should be more proof against such things if we were more accustomed to have recourse to the Divine helps graciously offered us. You know what a source of comfort it is to lay open your

grief to a sympathising friend. This source of help and consolation may fail you, but there is no imaginable state in which you may not spread your sorrow before the Lord. Nor can any friend so fully enter into it, compassionate it, relieve it. What a privilege it is to have such a Comforter always at hand! How completely are they enemies to their own happiness who neglect to avail themselves of such an advantage (H. E. I. 3739–3741, 199, 2311, 2322; P. D. 96. 2820).

2. Connected with Hezekiah's sorrow there was *fear*. The more reason for spreading his case before the Lord, of all friends the most willing and able to remove the cause of apprehension. Daniel in the den of lions, Shadrach and his brethren in the furnace, Paul and Silas in prison, might be quoted in proof of God's readiness to deliver His people from fear and danger. Whatever may be the nature or the source of your fear, spread it before the Lord (H. E. I. 4058).

3. Another feeling which the perusal of Sennacherib's letter was likely to produce in Hezekiah's mind was *irritation*. It was written in a tone of proud sarcasm, well calculated to produce this effect. If Hezekiah found any such feeling arise in his mind in reading it, what could he do better than lay it before the Lord? We are continually liable to meet with circumstances calculated to ruffle the temper. Then, if we wish to feel and act as Christians should, let us spread the case before the Lord; let us not trust to our command of temper, or to any resolutions we may have formed, but meet the sudden call upon our patience and forbearance by a prompt application to the Fountain whence those graces flow. It is possible to pray under any circumstances. Ejaculatory prayer is a most precious privilege, especially in circumstances of sudden trial or temptation. As anger springs up so suddenly in the mind in cases of irritation, it is most happy that there is an antidote to its evil effects on the mind that may be resorted to as speedily (H. E. I. 3765–3773). How much better is prayer than angry retorts (H. E. I. 261–271).

The good effects of the habit of carrying everything to God are not limited to those three cases; they extend to every conceivable circumstance of trial or temptation. They have yet to learn the value of religion who do not know the difference it makes in a state of trial and affliction to have the privilege of turning to a reconciled and loving Father, and spreading our calamity before Him, and asking His tender and strong support. As trials may befall us any hour, we should live in constant fellowship with Him (H. E. I. 3872–3879).—*John Marriott, M.A.: Sermons*, pp. 424–436.

A King's Prayer.

xxxvii. 15–20. *And Hezekiah prayed, &c.*

I. **Hezekiah prayed to Jehovah as the God of his nation.** "O Lord God of Israel." 1. The nation bore the name of one of its progenitors, who "as a prince had prevailed with God." The name Israel had been more generally applied to the northern kingdom, which had already been overthrown, but Hezekiah claims it for the remnant that was left. When he uttered that name, did he wish to remind himself of Jacob's power in prayer, or of God's special interest in His nation? Perhaps both. God had chosen, defended, saved it. Names which recall Divine deliverance may encourage us in prayer. 2. His nation was Jehovah's peculiar dwelling-place: "Which dwelleth between the cherubim." The Shekinah, symbol of the Divine presence, shone forth from between those weird figures on either side of the mercy-seat. Hezekiah's reference to this peculiar Divine manifestation was intended to suggest that God would protect His own dwelling-

place. This is true. God's dwelling-place is always safe, whether it be a nation—a man—a church (H. E. I. 1246–1251).

II. **In his prayer Hezekiah recognises the sole supremacy of Jehovah.** "Thou art the God," &c., "and have cast their gods into the fire," &c. Polytheism prevailed in the nations surrounding Judæa. Sennacherib had spoken of Jehovah as if He were the God merely of the Jews, and in his ignorance supposed that Hezekiah had offended Him by removing the "high places." Hezekiah asserted—1. That Jehovah was the only true God. 2. That He exercised supreme control over all the kingdoms of the earth.

III. **He appealed to Jehovah as the Maker of heaven and earth.** In the sublime acknowledgment these truths are involved:—1. *That He is eternal* (H. E. I. 2253; P. D. 1492, 1518). 2. *That He is separate from all His works.* He is immanent in them, but independent of them (P. D. 1519). 3. *That He is omnipotent.* He who made the universe must be almighty (H. E. I. 2270; P. D. 1509). 4. *That He has all things under His control* (H. E. I. 4023). This conception of God afforded solid ground for Hezekiah's faith. Before the greatness of Jehovah the might of His enemies sank into nothingness. Large conceptions of God will ever give large expectations in prayer. The more we widen our views of God, the more confidence we shall have in Him in trouble.

IV. **Hezekiah prayed with great earnestness.** "Lord, bow down Thine ear," &c. "Now, therefore, O Lord, our God, *I beseech Thee.*" Fervent desires lead invariably to ardent expressions. Cold prayers are no prayers. Earnestness is needed, not to lead God to observe our condition, nor to create in Him a disposition to help us, but—1. That the strength of our desires may be revealed. 2. That we may be raised from the low condition of formal devotion. 3. That we may have all the spiritual culture which the outcries of real need may impart. 4. That we may be prepared to receive deliverances thankfully (H. E. I. 3831–3838, 3893).

V. **Hezekiah recognised the greatness of the deliverance which he sought.** "Of a truth, Lord," &c. Other kingdoms had fallen; why not his? Only that his hope was in God. No human ingenuity or might could deliver him. Men must be brought to see that their need of deliverance is great. Sometimes they are brought to see this by temporal emergencies. Such crises teach us more of God than years of ordinary living (H. E. I. 117–121). Spiritual deliverances must come from God alone. The soul is a besieged city. The forces of Diabolus are around Mansoul. Its Sennacherib is mighty. The deliverance which it needs is great. To recognise the greatness of the deliverance we need will—1. Deepen our sense of our own helplessness. 2. Stimulate the exercise of great faith. 3. Prepare us for the manifestation of God's great delivering hand.

VI. **Hezekiah associated the glory of Jehovah with the deliverance which he sought.** The reproaches that had been cast upon him had been cast upon God. The deliverance of Jerusalem would manifest God's sole supremacy in the earth—"that all the kingdoms," &c. No prayers are so powerful as those which seek God's glory, for *that* is the real and ultimate good of humanity. Many prayers will not bear this test; they are earthly, narrow, selfish (P. D. 2842).

Hezekiah's prayer prevailed. The besieging army was destroyed; whether, as Kingsley suggests, "by a stream of poisonous vapours such as often comes forth out of the ground during earthquakes and eruptions of burning mountains, and kills all men and animals that breathe it," or by a pestilence, or by the simoom, we cannot tell. But it was God's delivering hand put forth in answer to Hezekiah's faith and prayer—1. That His people might learn to put their trust in Him; and 2. That all the earth might know that none can defy His power and prosper. —*W. Osborne Lilley: The Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. pp. 521–524.

A Christian Prayer.

xxxvii. 20. *Now, therefore, O Lord our God, save us, &c.*

The conclusion of Hezekiah's prayer. Sennacherib had accomplished the conquest of several countries, notwithstanding the protection of their gods. He declared that the God whom Hezekiah trusted would also be unable to deliver him. What could the king do better than spread the letter before the Lord, cry for help, and make the reproach of the Almighty's power the principal plea? God's honour was at stake. If Jerusalem was saved, it would be a demonstration of God's exclusive divinity to all the nations around. The result was that the angel of the Lord destroyed the Assyrian camp, so that Sennacherib returned to Nineveh. It is one of the most remarkable answers to prayer.

This is pre-eminently a Christian prayer—that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that the Lord is God alone. It is the end toward which all Christian desire and effort is directed. We will consider it in this view, and notice—

I. The consummation which is desired.

It is that all mankind may believe in the one true God. Most of the nations of ancient times believed in a multiplicity of divinities, as the inhabitants of India do now. But many of these peoples were devoted to some one god in particular, who was supposed to take their country under his protection. The gods were local. They did not exclude each other. In time of war the question, so far as the gods were concerned, was not which nation was protected by the true God, but which god was the strongest.

The spirit of Judaism was entirely antagonistic to this. The unity of God was its great doctrine. It was not missionary; it was a *silent* protest. So far as they were faithful to the teaching they had received, the belief of the Jewish people was, that while the Divine Being stood in special covenant relations to them, He was the exclusive Divine Being; that until the nations should become acquainted with Him they had no God at all.

Christianity occupies a similar position, only the position is extended. When it commenced its career, it made itself felt, not as a silent protest, but as an active aggressive agency which aimed at the overthrow of all idolatry. It assumed the position that all the religions of the earth are false, while it is the only religion for man. From that position it has not descended. To do so would be to efface itself, therefore it cannot accept the modern paganism. It cannot take its place as one of the many forms, perhaps the most enlightened, in which the religious sentiment is expressed. It cannot accept the courtesies of "thoughtful men" on these terms. It must be all or nothing. It is the channel through which the one God has revealed Himself as the redeeming God. The consummation desiderated by the Christian Church is that all the nations of the earth may be brought to the knowledge of Him as thus revealed.

II. The reason why it is desired.

1. *Because it is essential to the Divine honour.* God is not regardless of His glory. He might have remained alone; but He chose to call into existence creatures able to contemplate His glory. Before them He has set His works. He wishes to live in their thoughts and affections, not merely as a distant object of awful contemplation, but as one enshrined in their heart's love. He desires to be so real to them as that they shall connect Him with all the events of history and all the experience of life. But this cannot be, if He is unknown or regarded as one of many. The honour of the sovereign cannot be divided; neither can the honour of God. It is something by itself. He is jealous of it. So are His people. They are

anxious that He receive His proper honour from all the world.

2. *Because it is necessary to religious worship.* Some religious worship enters into the life of mankind everywhere. But it cannot be indifferent whether it shall be offered to the only Being capable of receiving it, or to nothing. The notion entertained of the object of worship regulates the nature of worship. Contrast heathen with Christian worship. An unknown God cannot be satisfactorily worshipped. The God of Christianity can be the object of a worship that is real so far as the worshipper is concerned, and acceptable to Him to whom it is presented.

3. *Because it affects the experience of life.* A man's thoughts respecting God must affect his life at every point. He may not believe in any. He may believe in many. He may believe in one. He will be influenced in relation to the duties, the trials, and the difficulties of life. Is not the ideal of possible excellence for humanity higher under the influence of the Christian than under any other form of belief or unbelief respecting God? In the inevitable sorrows of life, is it not a very different thing to be ignorant of God from what it is to know Him as one who sympathises with the sufferer, and whose hand will remove the suffering when it has accomplished its appointed work? The knowledge of God is the most practical of all knowledge. It moulds our life, character, experience, conduct, at every point.

4. *Because it secures the salvation of the soul* (John xvii. 3). There must be an experimental acquaintance with Him. It is realised in the friendship with Him that comes through faith in Christ. It is an abiding spiritual life, gradually unfolding into eternal life.

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH IT WILL BE REALISED.

The prayer contemplates Divine action as evidence. "Save us from His hand." According to the reasoning of the time this would be the proof. Reasoning from facts still the most satisfactory. Thus we may reason —1. From *creation.* The wisdom and power displayed are the wisdom and power of One. 2. From *redemption.* God has interposed for many. He has actually saved many. Every conversion strengthens this argument. 3. From *the preservation of the living Church.* In spite of persecution, infidelity, lapse of time.

We may therefore make it a plea for the bestowment of saving blessings, as Hezekiah did.

Do you believe in Him? Live as you believe. Think what would be the effect if all did so. Tell it to the heathen. Pray for them in praying for yourself.—*J. Rawlinson.*

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH A CONTINUATION OF THE JEWISH.

xxxvii. 31. *And the remnant that is escaped, &c.*

When the power and splendour of the family of David were failing, the prophets foretold that the kingdom of the saints should one time be restored. Has this promise yet been fulfilled or no? and if fulfilled, in what sense?

There are other prophecies parallel to the text, *e.g.*, Jer. xxxi. 31–33; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Isa. xli. 14, 15, lxii. 1, 2.

That these and a number of other prophecies are fulfilled in the Christian dispensation is plain from the express assertions of inspired persons (Acts xv. 13–17). This explains the language of Moses, in which the perpetual obligation of the law is asserted, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you," &c.; and after punishment, return of prosperity was promised, on condition of returning to the law (Deut. iv. 30, xi. 22–25).

Consider one or two difficulties—

1. It may be said that the prophecies have not been, and never will be, fulfilled in the letter, because they contain expressions and statements which do not admit, or certainly have

not, a literal meaning. But the use of figures in a composition is not enough to make it figurative as a whole; we constantly use figures of speech whenever we speak, although the main course of our conversation is to be taken literally. Now this will apply to the language of the prophets. The words "David," "Israel," "Jerusalem," and the like, are not so much figures as proper names which have a figurative origin, or words which, having first had a confined sense, come, as language proceeds, to have a wide one. All these words convey a literal truth in their substance.

2. It may be asked whether it is possible to consider the Christian Church, which is so different from the Jewish, a continuation of it. It may be argued that Christ founded His Church as a new thing in the earth. Observe—(1.) That the chosen people had in former ages gone through many vicissitudes, many transformations, before the *revolution* which followed on Christ's coming. They had been shepherds, slaves; the place of God's presence had moved about; they had been governed by a lawgiver, by judges, by kings, by priests. The change when Christ came from a local into a catholic form, was not abrupt, but gradual; what was first a dispersion became a diffusion. And let it be observed, a change in externals was anticipated as regards the city of God in the Old Testament. "Thou shalt be called by a new name," says the prophet (chap. lxii. 4). (2.) It may be objected that the change was internal, not external only; it became a Church of Gentiles, instead of a Church of Jews. But changes of this kind had occurred before, *e.g.*, the change which destroyed the substantive existence of the ten tribes; in an earlier age, only two of those who left Egypt with Moses entered the promised land. The line of continuity, surely, was not less definite when the Church became Christian. The sacred writers show themselves aware of this peculiarity in the mode in which God's purposes are carried on from age to age. They are frequent in speaking of a "remnant" as alone inheriting the promises (Rom. xi. 2–5; Isa. i. 9; Ezek. xi. 13; Jer. xl. 15; Hag. i. 14; Joel ii. 32; Micah v. 8; Zech. viii. 12). There was no substitution of a new Church for an old; it was but a manifestation of the old law of "the remnant," by which the many were called and the few chosen. We may consider, then, the word "remnant," so constantly used in Scripture, to be the token of identity of the Church, in the mind of her Divine Creator, before and after the coming of Christ. Paul expressly inculcates that the promises made to Israel are really accomplished, without any evasion, in the Divine protection accorded to Christians.

To conclude:—1. Whether we can clear up these points or no, they are not greater than the difficulties which attend on other confessedly fulfilled and very chief and notable prophecies, as that of the dispersion of the Jews. They were threatened with the evils which have befallen them, supposing they did *not* keep their law; whereas in the event the punishment has come upon them apparently *for keeping* it; because they would not change the law for the Gospel, *therefore* have they been scattered through the nations. In this it is implied that in rejecting the Gospel they in some way or other rejected their law, or that the Gospel is the continuation or development of the law. In a similar way are the prophecies concerning the elect *remnant* fulfilled in the history of the Christian Church. 2. If the prophecies in their substance certainly have had a literal fulfilment, then this will follow, viz., that the very appearance of separation and contrast does but make it more necessary that there should be some great real agreement and inward unity between one and the other, whether we can discover what it is or not on account of which they are called one. All Scripture has its difficulties; but let us not, on account of what is difficult, neglect what is

clear. Perchance, if we had learnt from it what we *can* learn by our own private study, we should be more patient of learning from others those further truths which, though in Scripture, we cannot learn from it ourselves. —*John Henry Newman: Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, pp. 180–198.

HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER.

Isa. xxxviii. 1–19.

In this narrative there are three points of difficulty and many points of instruction.

I. THREE POINTS OF DIFFICULTY.

1. *Why was Hezekiah afraid to die?* Answer: (1.) Even to a *Christian* man, death is an event of unutterable solemnity, for which he feels it necessary to make the most serious preparation, and which he would not like to have occur to him suddenly. (2.) Hezekiah had not that *clear* view of the future which has been granted to us (ver. 18; 2 Tim. i. 10). (3.) His kingdom was threatened by a powerful enemy, and the important reforms which he had been prosecuting were incomplete; and even good men are apt to forget that God can raise up others to do His work more efficiently than they have done it. (4.) At that time he had no child, and that he should die childless appeared inconsistent with God's promise to David (1 Kings ii. 4). Probably it was a recollection of this promise that prompted his reference to his integrity (ver. 3). In those words there is no boastfulness; they are an appeal to the Divine faithfulness. On all these accounts a prolongation of his life seemed to Hezekiah desirable, and he sought it from God in prayer.

2. *When we compare vers. 1 and 5, do we not find an astonishing reversal of a Divine decree altogether inconsistent with the doctrine of God's unchangeableness?* No. "The same decree that says, 'Nineveh shall be destroyed,' means, 'If Nineveh repent, it shall not be destroyed.' He that finds good reason to say, 'Hezekiah shall die,' yet still means, 'If the quickened devotion of Hezekiah importune Me for life, it shall be protracted.' And the same God that had decreed this addition of fifteen years had decreed to stir up the spirit of Hezekiah to that vehement and weeping importunity which should obtain it" (*Bishop Hall*).

3. *What was the nature of the sign given to confirm Hezekiah's faith?* For a discussion of this point, see note (α).

II. MANY POINTS OF INSTRUCTION.

1. *Sickness and death are the common lot of mankind.* Kings are liable to them as well as beggars (H. E. I. 1536, 1537). 2. *In the extremity of suffering, when all human help is vain, the righteous can turn to God.* Pitiable would have been Hezekiah's case, monarch though he was, if he could only have "turned his face to the wall." 3. *In every extremity, the most powerful of all remedies is prayer* (H. E. I. 3720–3724). 4. *How promptly God sometimes answers prayer* (2 Kings xx. 4). 5. *God answers prayer instrumentally.* In this case He did it by suggesting a simple remedy (ver. 21), which perhaps the court physicians had thought it beneath their dignity to employ. 6. *Those who have been restored from dangerous illness should make public acknowledgment of God's goodness.* 7. *How great are our privileges in possessing the Gospel*, through which "life and immortality are brought to light," and death stripped of its terror! In the market-place of Mayence stands a statue of Gutenberg, the inventor of printing, on the base of which there is this honourable inscription:—"The knowledge which was once the exclusive possession of princes and philosophers he has put within the reach of the common people." A similar statue might be erected to the honour of our Saviour, who has made those views of the future life which cheered only a few of the noblest saints (such as David in Ps. xxiii. 6) the common heritage of the whole Church. No true believer can

now be so much afraid of death as Hezekiah was (1 Cor. xv. 55–57).

(a.) "*And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.*"—2 Kings xx. 11.

How was this wonderful result secured? Did God arrest the earth as it revolved on its axis, and wheel it round in the opposite direction? No one who considers what would be the natural result of such a proceeding, and what a stupendous series of miracles would have been needed to have prevented the destruction of all life upon the earth, will think so for a moment, especially when a course much simpler, and equally efficacious, is suggested by the very words of the different narratives. Isaiah indeed says, "So the SUN returned ten degrees" (xxxviii. 8). But his record of what seemed to occur must be interpreted by what God had promised to do: "Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward." And in the narrative in the Book of Kings it is the *shadow* and not the *sun* that is spoken of throughout. To reverse the shadow in the dial it needed nothing more than *a miraculous refraction of the light;* and we believe that this is what occurred, not because it was an easier thing for God to do, but because it is in harmony with all that He does to believe that when two courses were open to Him, one exceedingly simple and one exceedingly complex, He would choose the simple course. God never wastes power. The extraordinary results produced by the refraction of light are familiar to all who have given any attention to natural philosophy. The atmosphere refracts the sun's rays so as to bring him in sight, on every clear day, before he rises on the horizon, and to keep him in view for some minutes after he is really below it. Contradictory as it may sound, on almost any summer evening you may see the sun at least five minutes after he is set. It is entirely owing to refraction that we have any morning or evening twilight. That the rays of the sun can be so refracted as to cause him to be seen where he actually is not is thus a matter of daily experience. And there are some extraordinary cases on record. Kepler, the great astronomer, mentions that some "Hollanders, who wintered in Nova Zembla in the year 1596, were surprised to find that, after a continual night of three months, the sun began to rise about *seventeen days* sooner than he should have done." This can only be accounted for by a miracle, or by an extraordinary refraction of the sun's rays passing through the cold dense air in that climate. In 1703 again, the prior of the monastery at Metz, in Lothringen, and many others, observed that the shadow of a sundial went back an hour and a half. It is thus abundantly plain that the result related could have been secured by a refraction of the light, a common occurrence in Nature. The miracle consisted *in its happening at that particular moment;* just as in the case of the fish that Peter caught which contained money. Many fish containing money have been caught; but here was the miracle—that this fish was caught at the very time which Christ had indicated. In like manner the miraculous element in the regression of the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz was its occurring just at the very time at which it was needed to verify the prophet's word and strengthen the monarch's faith.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

xxxviii. 1. *Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.*

This announcement was made to Hezekiah when suffering under dangerous illness. In answer to his prayer the sentence was mitigated. Fifteen years were added to his life. It is not wrong to pray for the prolongation of life when important interests are concerned, and when we pray with due submission to Him whose prerogative it is to fix its duration.

The text furnishes a theme for useful meditation. It contains—

I. A SOLEMN ANNOUNCEMENT.

"Thou shalt die." It may be viewed either as the declaration of a familiar truth or as the prediction of an immediate event. 1. *As the declaration of a familiar truth.* Nothing is more familiar. The universal reign of death over all the generations that have preceded us necessitates the conclusion that, unless we are alive when the Lord comes, we shall follow them. We are reminded of the truth by obituary notices in newspapers, by the spectacle of funerals passing quietly along the streets, by the silent departure of friends. "The sentence of death has passed upon all men." However long life may be protracted in individual instances, it never suggests the question whether they will be exceptions to the general rule. It only suggests the wonder that in any in-

stance life is so far protracted. The only uncertain thing is how much longer or shorter than the average our own life will be. Death may come to us when in fullest health by the unexpected accident, or by the illness which has been caught we know not how, or by the subtle disease which silently undermines the system, eating away the cord that has bound us to life (H. E. I. 1536–1546; P. D. 751, 752).

Nor is this event a mere departure from the present life. To our friends it is chiefly that. It is their deprivation of all that makes us interesting and valuable to them. To ourselves it is very much more. It is the precursor of our appearance before the judgment-seat of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 12; Matt. xxv. 34, 41; Rev. xx. 12). It is to us a much more serious matter than passing into nothingness.

Is it, therefore, a subject to be studiously avoided? Is it not one that should be often before us? Look it in the face; dwell on it. Such thought will not produce indifference to the present. It will invest it with a deeper seriousness. Its interests and duties will be contemplated in their connection with the great future. The smallest thing has such a connection. The attitude we assume towards God, Christ, the Divine commands, His kingdom. Our conduct in business, the family, among men. The influence of our words, acts, spirit, character. All these come into this great account. Death closes the account. Does not this attach dignity, solemnity, earnestness to the whole of life? (H. E. I. 1557–1566).

2. *As the prediction of an immediate event.* Supposing, instead of the familiar truth, it were announced to us on good authority that immediately, or within a given time, we should die, what would be the effect? There are aged Christians, whose life-work is done, to whom it would be welcome news. There are young Christians who have recently found peace in Christ but have not yet realised the privilege of working for Him, to whom it would be welcome. There are others to whom it would be terrible, because they have not found Christ nor surrendered to God. It would be to them like the knell of doom (P. D. 684). And yet it may be the duty of some one to make that announcement (α).

II. A SUITABLE DIRECTION.

"Set thine house in order." This direction is twofold. 1. *With regard to your worldly affairs.* The king was directed to give command concerning his house. His wishes respecting the succession to the throne. Every business-man should keep his affairs in such order that if he were suddenly called away there would be no difficulty. Every one possessed of property should, in view of the uncertainty of life, make his will. Many leave this duty to the last. If it has been so left and sickness comes, it should be one of the first things done. It will not hasten death. It will save expense. It will secure the rights of all. It will prevent disputes. It will relieve the mind. It will leave it free to attend to the soul. 2. *With regard to your eternal interests.* Think of the soul's future. Are you prepared for the great journey? Are you ready with your accounts? Recall your obligations to the Almighty. Consider how they have been discharged. Overcome your reluctance to a thorough conviction of sin. Let there be humility, contrition, repentance. Seek mercy. There is a Saviour. Believe in Him. Yield your heart. If already a Christian, survey the position. If near death, all this is obviously necessary. If not near death, or death not apparently near, it is necessary on the ground of your liability to death. It will come some time. The only safety is to close with Jesus now.—*J. Rawlinson.*

(α) It is a distressing duty. It requires the skilful and delicate hand. But it must be performed. There is the tender and delicate girl who took a cold some time ago. She was better and worse. It was nothing. Somehow she became weaker. At length she had only strength to lie in bed. She is sure that

with more genial weather she will recover. All has been done. One day the physician, with grace and sympathetic manner, tells her mother the case is hopeless. Break it to her. How can she? There is a fear that the revelation may accelerate the catastrophe. It may not. The sick are not usually so much alarmed at the thought of death as is supposed. At any rate, it seems only fair to them that they should know the seriousness of their position. If they are already saved, it will probably lead them to plant their feet more firmly on the Rock of Ages. If they are not yet saved, it may not be too late.—*Rawlinson.*

Duties of the Sick and Dying.

xxxviii. 1. *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die.*

This message sent from God to Hezekiah in his sickness contains a warning applicable to us all. It becomes us all to maintain such order in our worldly and spiritual affairs as that death, whenever He knocks at our door, may find us prepared to obey his summons (H. E. I. 1562–1566). But this is especially the duty of those who are visited, even now, by the forerunners and harbingers of death (H. E. I. 1561).

Most men, when laid aside by sickness, are disposed to turn in their pain and apparent peril to God who hath smitten, and who alone can heal; and to prepare for the great change in which the sickness may terminate. But few when thus called upon know how to set about the work, which they are then ready to allow to be most necessary and urgent. Even those who have lived outwardly blameless lives, are apt to be so distressed and confused by fear of death, that they do not know how to do what will turn the king of terrors into a messenger of peace, rest, and immortality (H. E. I. 1567, 1568, 1570; P. D. 684, 741, 761). Therefore, let those who are now in health receive some hints for their behaviour under sickness.

I. Duties to be performed by the sick and dying.

1. The first act of the mind on receiving any warning of our mortal and most frail condition should be an act of recollection, a solemn meditation on the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Most High, in whose hands alone we are, who can kill and make alive (*a*). Let us think especially of the love which He has shown us in the gift of His Son and the help of His Holy Spirit.

2. When our minds are thus sobered and composed, we must consider what means are yet within our reach to interest God's power and mercy in our favour. This may be best accomplished by repentance. To this an examination of our past life is absolutely necessary.

In this examination let us attend to the following cautions:—(1.) Let it be honest, however much this may humble us. (2.) Let us not attempt to plead our own good deeds in extenuation of our sins. (3.) Let us not be too particular or dwell too long in our recapitulation of such sins as are gone by and are irremediable; for these regrets, however natural, are useless, and beyond a certain degree injurious. With such recollections a guilty pleasure may be revived in our souls; our fancy may return with more regret than horror to the scenes of our former enjoyment. (4.) Let us be more anxious to recollect those sins, if there be any, for which it is in our power to make reparation. In this let us be most searching and honest. Thorough restitution is essential to prove that our repentance is genuine, and so also is sincere forgiveness of our enemies.

3. Thus truly penitent, let us by faith grasp firmly God's promises of forgiveness through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 John i. 9).

4. If we have been so unwise as to have left our worldly affairs unsettled, let us not be influenced by any foolish fear of alarming our family, or of appearing alarmed ourselves, from immediately making such a disposition of our property as we shall not fear to give account of in the hour of judgment.

5. Let us make up our mind to renounce the world entirely, and all restless hope of recovery; resigning all our prospects entirely into the hand of God, who is best acquainted with our wants and with the wants of those whom we are about to leave behind; and who is infinitely able to protect and provide for us and them (H. E. I. 157, 158, 4055).

6. That our meditations may become holy and comfortable, our repentance sincere and effectual, our restitution humble and public, our charity pure and edifying, our justice without taint, our resignation without reserve, let us give ourselves diligently to prayer (H. E. I. 177, 178, 3739–3746).

7. In order that we may be assisted in these spiritual duties, let us send promptly for the minister of the Church to which we belong.

II. SINS AGAINST WHICH WE MUST BE ON OUR GUARD.

The sins to which the sick and dying are most exposed are evil and trifling thoughts, unthankfulness, impatience, peevishness, and hypocrisy. To the first two of these men are liable on any remission of pain, or appearance of approaching amendment. There is no other cure for these than an immediate return to prayer and meditation. These remedies will also keep us from murmuring and ill-temper. Hypocrisy may seem a strange vice to impute to a sick or dying person, but it is not uncommon. It is shown in seeking compassion and kindness by counterfeiting the appearance of greater suffering than really belongs to our cases, or in the affectation of more faith, or resignation, or humility, or peace of conscience than either our own hearts or God will sanction. The desire of worldly praise will sometimes linger so late, and cling so closely about the affections of man, that some persons continue to act a part until their voice and senses fail them.

Let the difficulty of the duties which a sick man has to perform, and the number and greatness of the temptations to which he is liable, be an argument with us to leave as little as possible to be done in that state of weakness and alarm (H. E. I. 4251–4258).—*Reginald Heber: Sermons*, vol. i. pp. 92–111.

(a.) This will lead us to submit with more temper and mildness to whatever means are prescribed for our recovery, and also to wait their event with less querulous eagerness than if we corroded our thoughts by the pangs we endure or by the earthly succours whereby we hope to escape or lessen them. There is something soothing as well as sublime in the contemplation of greatness and power. We feel it when we gaze on the great works of Nature. He whose heart expatiates in the prospect of the ocean or of the starry heaven is for a time insensible to his own resentments or misfortunes, and is identified, as it were, with the glorious and tranquil scene before him. One of the principal joys of heaven, we are told, is the delight of gazing upon God; and even in this state of mortal darkness and misery, if we can for a time so forsake the thoughts of earthly things as to call up to our mind whatever images of greatness, and power, and perfection the Scriptures have revealed to us concerning Him, our heart will be filled as by necessity with love and admiration for an object so glorious, and our resignation to His decree will become a matter, not only of necessity, but in some respects of choice. . . . Most unreasonable is their conduct who, in the beginning of sickness, drive away all serious thoughts from the soul, through a fear of injuring the body. Even if this were necessarily the case, the risk is so far less in dying soon than in dying unprepared, that the former danger should be cheerfully encountered rather than incur the possibility of the latter. But the cases of sickness are very few in which, at the beginning of a disorder, such religious considerations can do our bodily health any harm. On the contrary, that awe and tranquillity of soul which are induced by them may in many cases be of real advantage.—*Heber.*

DISTRESS IN PROSPECT OF DEATH.

xxxviii. 2, 3. *Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, &c.*

The causes of Hezekiah's reluctance to die may be gathered from his circumstances. [See Outline: *Hezekiah's Prayer*, p. 426.] That ungodly men should be terrified at death is what might be expected (P. D. 684); but

reluctance to die is not confined to them (H. E. I. 1570).

I. *The Christian has naturally a feeling of repugnance at the very thought of the disruption of the union between soul and body.* What precedes death, the stroke itself, and its consequences, all excite feelings of dread (P. D. 741, 761).

II. *True believers may feel reluctant to die because of the doubts which they entertain with respect to their eternal state.* After death is the judgment. Their fears may proceed from various causes. From constitutional temperament, increased by a relaxed state of the nervous system; from the prevalence of unbelief, the imperfection of knowledge and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; from the powerful agency of the god of this world in producing them. A last desperate effort is made to overthrow faith. While these prevail, recovery from bodily distress is felt to be a mercy of no ordinary kind (H. E. I. 323).

III. *Religion may be in a declining state in them, and a consciousness of this may render the prospect of death distressing to them.* The progress of the Christian is not uniform. If, while in a backward state, he is called to die, conscience is awakened, and he is thrown into alarm (Matt. xxv. 1–13).

IV. *The prospect of death may be distressing, because the believer will then be deprived of all opportunity of honouring God in this world.* This was one reason for Hezekiah's unwillingness to die. He was in the prime of life. Believers, at a like time, may pray to live in order to be useful in the Church and world. The prayer proceeds from a right principle—a desire to honour God. It seems hard for the minister of Christ, after a long course of laborious preparation, to be smitten down to die before he has well begun the great work of preaching. The philanthropist, like Howard, feels a bitterness in the stroke. The Christian parent also. In these and like circumstances a rare strength of faith is called for.

V. *God may see good to withhold from true believers the comforts of religion under bodily distress and in their dying moments.* To what is the difference in the measure of comfort enjoyed on a deathbed to be ascribed? The sovereignty of God must here be admitted. Objection against it here applies equally in other circumstances. The Divine reasons may be inscrutable to man, although assuredly dictated by infinite wisdom. The newly converted may die joyfully; the veteran Christian may have much less comfort. But generally the faithful life will end, at least, in a peaceful death (H. E. I. 1264).

Would you meet death without terror? 1. *Improve by faith that righteousness which Christ wrought out in our nature.* 2. *See to it that your hearts are changed by the Spirit of God.* 3. *Devote yourselves unreservedly and unweariedly to the cultivation of holiness in heart and life.* The longer we are here, we are the more prone to set our hearts upon the world as if it were our rest. It is from this tendency that the aged Christian sometimes feels as great a reluctance to depart as the Christian in the morning of life (Col. iii. 2).—*James Anderson: Scottish Christian Herald*, iii. 569.

The Shortening of Human Life.

(*A Funeral Sermon.*)

xxxviii. 10. *I am deprived of the residue of my years.*

Briefly narrate the facts of Hezekiah's illness. The words of the text naturally suggest this general observation, that God deprives many of the human race of the residue of their years.

I. When God deprives any of mankind of the residue of their years.

1. *When He calls them out of the world before they have reached the limits of life which are to be found in Scripture*

(Ps. xc. 10). Hezekiah undoubtedly numbered his years according to this standard when he spoke (at forty years of age) of being deprived of the residue of his years. 2. *When He calls them out of the world before they have reached the bounds of life fixed by Providence.* Though the Scriptures limit life to seventy or eighty years, yet Providence often extends it to a longer period, even to a century. Many aged persons enjoy a large measure of health, strength, and activity; should any of these be suddenly cut down by disease or accident, they would be deprived of the residue of their years which they had anticipated, according to the course of Divine providence in fixing the limits of life to the aged. 3. *Even those who die before they have reached the bounds of life which are imposed by the laws of Nature, may be said to be deprived of the residue of their days.* Nature sets bounds to every kind of life in this world, not excepting human life. What the natural limit of human life is we cannot tell, but from the fact that some have survived for over a century and a half, we may infer that God has deprived the vast majority of the human race of the residue of their years, and has not allowed even one in a million to reach the bounds of life which Nature has set.

II. WHY GOD THUS SHORTENS THE LIVES OF MEN AND CUTS OFF THEIR EXPECTED YEARS.

1. Sometimes it is *to teach the living that He is not dependent upon them in the least degree.* Though He can and does employ them in His service, yet He can lay them aside whenever He pleases, and carry on His designs without their assistance. Let eminent and useful men like Hezekiah remember this, that they may not yield to the temptation of pride (H. E. I. 2218–2219). 2. In order *to teach mankind their constant and absolute* dependence upon Himself. This they are extremely inclined to forget, and their forgetfulness arises in a great measure from the consideration of the general bounds of life which Scripture, Providence, and Nature have set. To these well-known periods they naturally extend their views, desires, and expectations. But to make them sensible that they still live, move, and have their being in Himself, God continually deprives one and another, and much the largest portion of mankind, of the residue of their years. 3. *To teach the living the necessity of being continually prepared for another life* (H. E. I. 1543–1546). 4. *To teach the living the importance of faithfully improving life as long as they enjoy it.* All men are naturally slothful and strongly inclined to postpone present duties to a more convenient season. The best and most industrious of men need the sharp spur of the possibility of sudden death, and of being called away before their work is complete. When God cuts down the active and useful in the midst of their days, He warns us most solemnly (Eccl. ix. 10; H. E. I. 1562–1566). 5. God sometimes cuts short the days of the wicked *to prevent their doing evil in time to come* (Ps. lv. 23; Prov. x. 27; Eccl. vii. 17). 6. God sometimes shortens the lives of His faithful servants to prevent their seeing and suffering public calamities. It seems to have been in mercy to Hezekiah that God added only fifteen years to his life; had fifty years been added (and then at death he would only have been ninety), he would have been involved in the dreadful evils which were coming upon both his family and his kingdom (Isa. lvii. 1).

APPLICATION.—1. If God does not always deprive men of the residue of their years, *there is a propriety in praying for the lives of the aged as well as for the lives of the young.* Even the oldest persons living, though labouring under pains, infirmities, and diseases which seem to indicate the near approach of death, may yet pray for the removal or mitigation of their disorders, and for a longer space of life. Life is a blessing, and to pray for its continuance is a duty. 2. If God so often deprives men of the residue of their years, *it is extremely unreasonable and dangerous to flatter ourselves with the*

hope of living a great while in the world. What ground have we to expect that *our* days will be greatly prolonged; that *we* shall escape all the dangers and diseases which have proved so fatal to others, and live as long as man can live according to the course of nature? This expectation is as dangerous as it is absurd. It encourages the wicked to continue in sin. It is the strangest and most fatal error that mankind ever embraced (James iv. 14; Matt. xxii. 44). 3. Since God deprives so many of the residue of their years, *we ought to beware of placing too much dependence upon the lives of others, as well as of our own.* Others are as liable to leave us as we are to leave them (Ps. cxlvi. 3–5). 4. If God so often deprives men of the residue of their years, then *long life is a great as well as a distinguishing favour.* It is a talent capable of being improved to the highest public and private advantage. We should desire it for the sake of having greater opportunity of getting good, and still more of doing good. Had Hezekiah, Joseph, Joshua, Caleb, and David died in early manhood, how little comparatively they could have done for Israel! Since good men are to be rewarded according to their works, the longer they are permitted to live, the greater opportunity they enjoy of promoting their own future blessedness. 5. If God always has wise and good reasons for depriving men of the residue of their years, then *it is as reasonable to submit to His providence in one instance of mortality as another.* He knows all the disappointment which a strong man feels in being cut down in the midst of his days, all acute sorrow that is caused by an untimely death, and He sympathises with it all. He never afflicts willingly, nor grieves the children of men; He takes no pleasure in giving anxiety and distress to the dying, nor in desolating the hearts of the living; and when He does either, it is for a reason that is infinitely wise and infinitely kind. It behoves us then to say with Job: (xiii. 15, or i. 21).—*Dr. Emmons: Works*, vol. iii. pp. 79–92.

A Cry for Help.

xxxviii. 14. *O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.*

This prayer ascended from a sick-bed. State Hezekiah's circumstances. From many sick-beds it still ascends. 1. From the sick-bed of the Christian who is distressed by thoughts of what may befall his wife and children after his removal from them. 2. From the sick-bed of the Christian who perceives that the world has been gaining much on his heart. Overtaken in the very strength and flower of his days by a sudden and dangerous illness, he sees that in the midst of the bustle and business of an honest calling he has been gradually drawn off from a life of watchfulness and prayer, and that, while keeping the forms of godliness, he has lost much of its power. Death apparently at hand, his soul starts up alarmed. 3. From the sick-bed of the worldly man, who at length perceives his guilt and danger. His awakened conscience fills him with distress and fear (H. E. I. 1334–1339), and the approach of death terrifies him (H. E. I. 1567).

Show how graciously God deals with all these suppliants when they sincerely call upon Him. — *Richard Monks: Sermons*, pp. 230–249.

A good prayer:—1. *For the young man entering upon the duties of life.* Surrounded by the snares of the world, exposed to many temptations, and having in himself no strength or wisdom to deal with them aright. 2. *For the young man entering upon his Christian course.* Experimentally sensible of the deceitfulness of the heart, and conscious that there is one ever watchful, ever willing to encourage him in evil (H. E. I. 1061). 3. *For the Christian perplexed in the path of duty.*

4. *For the Christian on his dying bed* (H. E. I. 1570–1593).—*H. Montagu Villiers, M.A.: Sermons,* pp. 194–211.

Hezekiah's prayer reminds us of *man's need of a Divine Helper.* We need some one who can undertake to be our guide through life; to sustain us under the sorrows of life; to strengthen us against the temptations of life; to effect reconciliation between us and a justly offended God; to succour us in death; to welcome us to heaven, and to assign us our place in it.—*Horace Monod.*

The Suretyship of Christ.

xxxviii. 14. *Undertake for me.*

I. That man needs a surety. This is evident from several considerations. Man—1. *Is an insolvent debtor;* 2. *a captive;* 3. *a criminal;* 4. *helpless and mortal.*

II. That a surety has been provided (Heb. vii. 22, viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24). Christ was constituted a surety; not *for God to us,* but *for us to God.* He undertook to do for us, and in us, what we could not do for ourselves. Is man a debtor? Christ has paid the debt. Is man a captive? Christ came to set the captive free. Is man a criminal? Christ has endured the curse (Isa. liii. 6; 2 Cor. v. 21). Is man helpless and mortal? Christ has provided everlasting strength (2 Cor. xii. 9).

III. That there must be a believing application made to that Surety. We must put in claim for share in the suretyship of Christ—must say in faith, "Lord, undertake for me; be surety for me."

IV. The effects of such application. These are many and most important. In case of Hezekiah several are mentioned. God had sent him an alarming message. He wept and called upon God. His prayer was answered. A sign was given. During his sickness and after his recovery he had great exercises of soul. He thought of death (ver. 10); was annoyed because he was about to be cut off from the worship of God (ver. 11), and that by a premature death (ver. 12). But was there not a *remedy?* Yes. *What?* A believing application to the Lord as surety. "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." And what was the *consequence?* The whole tone of his thoughts was changed. He now recognises God's hand in the dispensation (ver. 15); sees these things to be good for his soul (ver. 16); believes his recovery certain—realises the forgiveness of sin—is enabled to praise God (ver. 19); can now resolve to teach his children about God's truth, and determine with them to bless and magnify God for ever (vers. 19, 20). Thus the realisation of God as surety, and a believing application to Him for help, proved the *turning-point* for good in Hezekiah's experience.

Application.—1. *In the way of warning.* (1.) Not to depend on ourselves for salvation. (2.) Not to neglect the means of grace. 2. *In the way of encouragement.* (1.) Jesus Christ is surety for all who believe in Him. (2.) All who are oppressed in body or soul may and should, by God's grace, believe in Jesus as their surety.—*T. Oliver: The Study and the Pulpit,* New Series, 1876, pp. 419–421.

Hezekiah's Resolution.

(*A New-Year Motto.*)

xxxviii. 15–20. *I shall go softly all my years, &c.*

This resolution grows out of that singular experience of sickness and recovery recorded in the preceding verses. It furnishes an excellent

motto for the year. Our translation is somewhat defective, but if we substitute "*on*" for "*in*" the correct sense will be clear. The meaning is that the recovered king would walk through the fifteen years that were added to his life in salutary remembrance of his dangerous illness, and of the goodness of God in prolonging his days on earth. The memory of that trouble and of the mercy that rescued him would put a staff in his hand to make his walk more devoted, circumspect, and consistent. Understood thus, the words are applicable to all. Some of you may be able to trace a close resemblance between your experience and that of Hezekiah. Like him, you may have escaped from a well-nigh fatal illness. But all of us can look back on similar periods —on mercies received and dangers averted—and in recollection of them we may say, "I shall go softly all my years *on* the bitterness of my soul."

I do not know any better commentary on these words than the opening stanza of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*:—

> "Men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

A good New Year's motto, which harmonises so sweetly with it. Our past experiences, our dead selves, may be made stepping-stones on which we may climb to a clearer vision and a loftier devotion. What, then, was the nature of that pathway of life which this good king engaged to pursue? What was the prospect which opened up before him?

1. *A walk of humble dependence on God.* This element in the resolution is distinctly expressed. In vers. 15, 16, God's Word and acts are viewed as the real supports of life. Looking above all secondary causes and natural agencies, the king acknowledges God as the source and giver of life. This is a great lesson, and one which an experience like that of Hezekiah can teach. It seems to us a natural thing to live on; we count on continued health and long life till some sickness lays us low, and we are brought to feel as we never felt before that our times are in God's hand. But whether we have passed through a dangerous illness or not, the resolution befits us all. Let us remember that God sustains and orders our lives.

It was, indeed, a singular position in which Hezekiah was placed. He knew precisely how long he would live. The duration of our pilgrimage is just as fixed as his was, only we do not know it (P. D. 2252). The thread of our life is in God's hand. Thus was Hezekiah taught to "go softly." His soul had passed through "great bitterness," and he shall bear it in mind, and his rescue from it deepen his dependence on God.

2. *A walk of usefulness.* It was on this plea that he had prayed for the prolongation of his life (ver. 3). He had rendered valuable service and had borne a consistent testimony. The convalescent king saw a prospect of further work for God on earth. He who a short time before this seemed about to leave his kingdom in confusion without an heir to the throne is now able to say, "The father of the children shall make known thy truth." Does it not become us to ask, Why is my life prolonged? Why have I been permitted to enter on a new year? Is it not for this reason, among others, that we may become increasingly serviceable in advancing the cause of truth? Better far that life should terminate than that we should live to no purpose, for every year adds to our responsibilities. Advance, then, into this year resolved that, God sparing you, you will live more useful lives (H. E. I. 3228–3251; P. D. 2269).

3. *A walk of thankfulness* (vers. 19, 20). How thankful this convalescent was for his restoration to health, and all the more so because to him, as to other saints of his age, the grave seemed dark and gloomy (ver. 18). It needed the Gospel of Christ's resurrection to dispel the darkness and the gloom. This psalm is itself a proof of Hezekiah's thankful spirit, and perhaps the 118th Psalm is another production of his pen, containing as it does words of hope suitable to this

period of his history (Ps. cxviii. 17, 18). Are we too resolved that our remaining years shall be years of thanksgiving, our lives a psalm of praise?

4. This fifteen years' walk was to be *a walk of peace* (ver. 17). The meaning here is that the affliction was sent with a view to his obtaining a more settled and abiding peace; it teaches us, as nothing else can, the secret of inward peace. What are the sources of dispeace? One of them is found—(1.) In our *earthly strivings and ambitions.* "There is no peace to the wicked." He is constantly on the rack of avaricious struggles, unsatisfied longings, sensual desires. Affliction can show us the utter vanity of earthly things. How poor the world looks as seen from within the curtains of a dying bed! The sufferer who has come back from the gates of death is able to estimate earthly things at their right value. He ceases from the low ambitions and carnal desires that once raged within him. 2. *Bodily pain and weakness* is another cause of unrest. An experience of this bitterness brings peace when the patient is restored to health. We set greater value on a blessing which we have lost and regained. One of our poets describes a convalescent gathering strength, and coming forth after long confinement to look upon the scenes of Nature—

> "The common earth and air and skies
> To him are opening paradise!"

To have such feelings we must have known affliction. For the enjoyment of this peace we must have tasted "great bitterness." 3. But the greatest source of dispeace is *unpardoned sin* (ver. 17). How complete is the forgiveness of sin as thus expressed! What a peace is enjoyed when guilt is removed and God's love shed abroad in our hearts! (H. E. I. 1893, 1894; P. D. 2675, 2677).

What more do we need to make this year a happy one than to set forward with this resolution? We cannot break away from the past. We are now what it has made us. Our "dead selves" make our living present selves. From our trials and sorrows we may gain supports for nobler endeavour. "I shall go softly," meekly, submissively, prayerfully, "on the bitterness of my soul." Do you wish some spring, some impulse to send you forward thus in life's pathway? Think of some bitterness in your past experience, some Marah which the Lord sweetened for you, some trouble from which He rescued you when you lay on the brink of death, or under the feeling of Divine desertion, or under the accusations of a troubled conscience, and make that "dead self" a support for the path before you."—*William Guthrie, M.A.*

The Restoration of Belief.

xxxviii. 15. *I shall go softly all my years, &c.*

In the case of Hezekiah, belief was restored by a great shock which brought him into contact with reality. He had been living, as many of us live, a pleasant, prosperous life, till he had really grown to believe that this world and its interests were the only things worth caring for. His treasures, his art collections, the beauty of his palace, made him love his life and dream that it was not a dream. God appeared to him not as to Adam, in the cool of the day, but as He came to Job, in the whirlwind and the eclipse, and Hezekiah knew that he had been living in a vain show. The answer of his soul was quick and sad, "By these things men live, O Lord;" these are the blows which teach men what life really is.

Many are prosperous, happy, and at ease. It will be wise for these to remember that thoughtless prosperity weakens the fibre of the soul (H. E. I. 3997–4014).

The blow which sobered Hezekiah was a common one. It did nothing more

than bring him face to face with death. The process whereby his dependence on God was restored was uncomplicated. But there are far worse shocks than this, and recovery from them into a godlike life is long and dreadful.

1. One of these is the advent of irrecoverable disease—protracted weakness or protracted pain. Then we ask what we have done: we curse our day. But our misfortune brings round us the ministering of human tenderness: slowly the soul becomes alive to love; and through the benign influence of human love the first step towards the restoration of belief has been made, the soil is prepared for the work of the Spirit of God. Then the Gospel story attracts and softens the sufferer's heart. Afterwards he reads that Christ's suffering brought redemption unto man, and begins to realise how he can fill up what is behindhand of the sufferings of Christ. This is not only the restoration of belief—it is the victory of life.

2. More dreadful than protracted disease is that shipwreck which comes of dishonoured love—

> "When all desire at last, and all regret,
> Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
> What shall assuage the unforgotten pain,
> And teach the unforgetful to forget?"

For some there is no remedy but death. Others live on in a devouring memory. And the memory poisons all belief in God. But there are many who recover, and emerge into peace and joy. Can we at all trace how this may be? Lapse of time does part of the work. It does not touch the memory of love. The pain of having a gift thrown aside has passed; the sweetness of having given remains. When we thought ourselves farthest from God, we were unconsciously nearest to Him. And so we are saved, faith is restored. Like Christ, we can say, "Father, forgive them, for they knew not what they did."

3. Many are conscious, in later life, that their early faith has passed away. It was unquestioning, enthusiastic. It depended much on those we loved. Religious feelings which had been without us and not within, slowly and necessarily died away. Becoming more and more liberal, we also became more and more unbelieving, and at last realised that our soul was empty. Are we to settle down into that? It is suicide, not sacrifice, which abjures immortality and prefers annihilation. Our past belief was borrowed too much from others. Resolve to accept of no direction which will free you from the invigorating pain of effort. Free yourself from the cant of infidelity. It boasts of love, it boasts of liberality. Its church is narrower than our strictest sect. Bring yourself into the relation of a child to a father. We need to come to our second self, which is a child—to possess a childhood of feeling in the midst of manhood.—*Stopford A. Brooke: Christ in Modern Life*, pp. 380–392.

A Great Deliverance.

xxxviii. 17. *Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.*

The text forms part of a king's song on recovering from a severe illness. "When we are raised from deep distress, our God deserves a song." But it points beyond temporal deliverance to salvation from the power and punishment of sin.

I. The sinner's condition.

In "the pit of corruption." This description suggests—1. *Loathsomeness.* It is a fit simile of the world in which the unconverted live. It is not a quagmire, but a pit; not a dry pit, but one full of corruption—filth, death, worms. To God, "glorious in holiness," every man in the pit of corruption must be loathsome. He may be educated, loving, philanthropic, and worldly wise, but being *dead in trespasses and sins*, he is fit only for being buried out of the sight of God and good men. 2. *Helplessness.* A man

in a pit is helpless, like Joseph. No man ever yet got out of the pit of corruption by his Latin, his logic, or his mother wit. It is not for him to postpone the date of a deliverance once vouchsafed. 3. *Increasing danger.* Men never mend in the pit.

II. THE SINNER'S HELPER.

"Thou," &c. In vain does the sinner look within himself or to his fellow-men for help, but God gives it. Every saint praises God for his salvation: "*Thou*," &c. Note, 1. The *freeness* of God's redeeming love. There is nothing in a man wallowing in a pit of corruption to draw out love. Where it is shown, it is a free gift. 2. The *fulness* of that love. "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." Some wink at our sins, others cast them into our teeth on all occasions. God does neither. He abhors sin, but when He forgives the sinner, He forgets the sin (Jer. l. 20; Rom. viii. 33; Ps. xxxii. 2; H. E. I. 2322–2337).

III. THE SINNER'S DUTY.

He is not to lie quiet, but to cry for a deliverer. Wishing, hoping, thinking will not do. The crying, to be effectual, must be made *now*. Now God says, "My arm is not shortened," &c. (lix. 1). When once gone, to all your cries His reply will be, "Because I called," &c. (Prov. i. 24–26).

Why will you die? Bring forth your strong reasons against salvation. —*M.: Christian Witness*, xviii. 392–393.

FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

xxxviii. 17. *For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.*

This is part of the song which Hezekiah wrote when he had recovered from his sickness. He had betaken himself to prayer. The nation, threatened with invasion from the powerful kingdom of Assyria, could ill afford to lose its head. His prayer was heard. The prophet was sent with a new message. The Divine hand was visible, although ordinary means were employed. This the king fully recognised (ver. 20). God's mercies should not be forgotten when the occasion has passed.

The king sees the connection of his disease with sin, and the removal of disease with the removal of his sins. From the text we observe that the forgiveness of sin is necessary, possible, complete, knowable.

I. Forgiveness of sin is necessary. Scripture traces suffering to sin. The fact of sin is prominent in the history of mankind. Its universality is the groundwork of the revelation of its remedy. It is written on the conscience. However oblivious of the fact in health and prosperity, men in sickness and disaster usually think of their sins as the remote or immediate cause. It is sometimes God's way of awakening attention (H. E. I. 56–89).

Until sin is forgiven, it is before the face of God (Ps. xc. 8; Heb. iv. 13). The accountability of man would be an unmeaning phrase if it did not involve the idea that an account is taken of his actions. They are all noted, good and bad, and tested by the Divine standard. Every man's are before the face of the Supreme Ruler and Judge for the purpose of being dealt with. This is his case until it is changed by the exercise of forgiveness. It is useless to ignore the need of forgiveness under the impression that we can, in some way, remove the stain. However much good a man may do, the fact of sin remains; and so long as he is under a law which requires unsinning obedience, the good cannot be set against the bad in the hope that the former will wipe the latter away. Forgiveness of the past is the first necessity.

II. Forgiveness of sin is possible. The Gospel builds on the groundwork laid. It provides and makes known a way by which forgiveness may be obtained. It is not by the enactment of a law obedience to which will have this

effect. Law brings the sinfulness into clear relief and renders escape impossible. Nor is it by the declaration of a general amnesty, which would virtually neutralise the law and its penalties. Nor is it by an exercise of the Divine sovereignty in the way of mercy to all men, nor even to the penitent, simply as such. God's way of forgiveness provides for the exercise of mercy by the satisfaction of the claims of righteousness. For its manifestation He prepared during long ages of teaching. In due time He sent His Son (Gal. iv. 4, 5). The interposition of Christ renders forgiveness possible. It includes His taking the sinner's obligations on Himself (Col. i. 14). This is the Divinely appointed way of forgiveness. It satisfies all the requirements of the case. It provides an adequate Mediator. It provides forgiveness on honourable terms. It is, so far as the sinner is concerned, a free forgiveness. It imposes no impossible condition. It says to the sinner under the burden of sin and guilt, satisfaction of the law, which is impossible to him, is no longer demanded, because it has been rendered by His great Substitute. It simply calls upon him to believe, repenting of his sins. If you see your sinfulness, if your soul is troubled by it, if you are anxious to obtain mercy, the Gospel bids you come to Jesus, and come at once. It assures a present, immediate, free pardon.

III. **Forgiveness of sin is complete.** "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." They were previously before the face of God. They are now taken thence and cast behind His back. You do that with a thing you have done with and intend to see no more. It is a most expressive representation of the Divine forgiveness. It attracts attention to its completeness. "All his sins," without exception or reservation, have been cast out of sight. They will never be produced against him. This is complete forgiveness. We can realise it better by comparison with the forgiveness exercised by men. Man's forgiveness is often very poor. "I can forgive, but I cannot forget." "I forgive, but I shall have no more to do with that man." Many do not even pretend to forgive. But God forgives, completely, fully (H. E. I. 2328–2348).

IV. **Forgiveness of sin is knowable.** The text is the language of assurance. Hezekiah inferred it from his recovery. We may be certified—1. By the written Word. 2. By consciousness of the Spirit's work in us—repentance, faith, love, surrender. 3. By the moral effects. Put all these together (H. E. I. 309, 310, 324, &c.)

Do you possess assurance? Your experience—1. Illustrates the Divine character: "merciful and gracious." Its most attractive light. 2. Produces grateful love. The greatest boon has won the heart. 3. Invites to holy obedience. Appeals to what is best. 4. Suggests evangelic action. Tell others. Seek the salvation of the worst.

Are you not forgiven? Perhaps indifferent. Perhaps desirous, but hesitating. Perhaps procrastinating. Do not trifle. Do not neglect. Do not delay. Be reconciled to God.—*J. Rawlinson.*

The Song of Hezekiah.

(*Sermon to the Young.*)

xxxviii. 18, 19. *For the grave cannot praise Thee, &c.*

This is part of Hezekiah's song of praise to God. He was very ill. A good man, yet rather afraid of death; certainly very anxious to live. When we are strong and full of life, it is easy to talk of braving all worldly sorrows; but when the time comes for us to prove our words, many who are now in heaven have said, "Spare me a little before I go hence and be no

more seen." In what affecting terms did Hezekiah bewail his sickness! "I said, in the cutting off my days, ... I shall not see the Lord," in His holy sanctuary on earth; "I shall behold man no more;" never again behold the human face divine, never meet again the welcoming smile of child or friend.

God heard Hezekiah's prayer, took pity upon him, turned back the sundial of his life fifteen years. The good king rejoiced in this gift of lengthened life. "The grave cannot praise Thee," &c.

Let us follow out this rejoicing of the king, this setting forth the advantages of the living above the dead. 1. The living are in possession of the time which is given to make reconciliation with God and secure an everlasting interest. We are all by nature strangers to God, enemies to Him in our mind and inclination. We are defiled and guilty creatures; this is the hour of cleansing, whilst the fountain stands open in which our sins may be washed away (2 Cor. vi. 2). We are by nature utterly unfit for heaven; this is the day of repentance as well as of pardon. At the summons of death we must go, whether prepared or unprepared, holy or unholy, hoping or despairing. While your hearts were unholy, your death, had it happened, must have been dreadful. Let those who have improved this gift of life to make their reconciliation with God highly value it, and magnify its important advantages with all the gratitude and zeal of the king of Judah. 2. Life is a precious and golden gift, because it affords a field for increasing in good works. We are required to be "zealous of good works." *Zealous;* not to touch a good work as if we were afraid of burning our fingers. Such works "are good and profitable to men." The days and years of life should be numbered by the multitude of good works, as by the revolutions of the earth. Lost and wasted time should not come into the account of life. Ah! if we reckoned thus, what a shrinking and contracting would take place! A Roman emperor, a heathen, used to say, "I have lost a day," if he had not done any good action in it. How many are there who live to no purpose at all, whom the world will not miss when they are gone! How many live to wicked purposes, and the world is glad to get rid of them! Some are mere cumberers of the ground; they bear the Christian name, but how different from Christ! "The night cometh," said He, "in which no man can work." "Ye are the light of the world," said Christ to His disciples, and how dark would this earth be were there no disciples of Christ upon it! "Ye are," said He, "the salt of the earth;" if the salt were gone, what corruption of manners, what filthy communications, what odious practices would overspread and defile society! One child of God in a family is like the ark in the house of Obed-Edom, of which we read, "The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-Edom," &c.; or like Joseph in Potiphar's house, of whom we read, "The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake," &c. We may follow up this idea, and say if one child of God is so great a blessing in a family, many may bless and save whole cities and nations. We find this to have actually been the case from what is said of Noah, Daniel, and Job. God said three thousand years ago, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and it is equally certain that wickedness overthroweth it. In all the Old Testament history, we see how He ascribes prosperity to the keeping of His commandments, and ruin to the breaking of them. We cannot suppose that it is in any way different now; that the Ruler of the Universe is in slumber, or, being awake, has altered the rules of His government. Life, and especially youthful life, is the time for good works and good actions; not one can be done in the grave.

CONCLUSION.—Let young persons value life. It has been said that we "take no note of time save from its

loss;" let not this be said of you. It is the gift of *time* that alone places you in a position to profit by all other gifts. Make good use of life; of this its pleasant morning: be obedient, be diligent, love each other, avoid quarrelling and evil words. Live so that the end will conduct you to a world where, though time will be no longer, life will continue for ever.—*George Clark, M.A.: Sermons*, pp. 239–246.

Praise for Preservation.

(*Last Sunday of the Year.*)

xxxviii. 19. *The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day.*

Such was Hezekiah's burst of thankfulness when God heard his prayer, and gave him fifteen years more of life. While the danger lasted, he was surprised into more of alarm than became his place and character; but now, marvellously spared, he calls upon the living everywhere to praise God for His goodness. *His* case, he feels, was *theirs* too. All men alike live upon God's bounty, and are debtors to His patience. He guards them from evil, —sends them good things, without which life must be presently extinguished, — renews their being, and makes it over to them by a fresh grant, not only when the closing year reminds us of the gift, but at each day's working time. Therefore Hezekiah is not satisfied with a solitary strain of thanksgiving. He looks round upon a world teeming with animated, intelligent beings, and in every brother whom God hath made and kept alive he finds one who should bring in his tribute of praise. He wants a chorus of rejoicing worshippers.

1. This season naturally makes us thoughtful. We think of what life has been to us lately, and what it might have been. We have nearly passed another stage on our journey to the grave, and we miss some who began it with us. We stand, like unwounded soldiers on the battlefield with the dead and the dying all round them. This is all God's doing. He who gives life sustains it. If to have lived on be deemed a blessing, and praise for the boon be due anywhere, it can only be to Him whose providential government of the world is like an hourly repetition of the creative power which called it out of nothing.

2. But is life worth having? Is prolonged life a blessing, and may we fairly require men to be grateful for it? This is assumed by Hezekiah. Life and praise may go well together, because to so great a degree life and happiness go together. Not always. Some are so unhappy that they cry out under their burden, and almost wish, for a moment, for deliverance at any cost. But the settled feeling of men's minds is the other way. To almost all of them life is the hoarded treasure which they will guard at any price. They will put up with the worst they have to bear before they will accept release on the terms of being banished straightway to the unknown world. The reason is, that by the side of this harvest of woe, of which they reap a few ears now and then, there groweth a harvest of blessing, of which they are constant reapers (P. D. 2282, 2256).

3. Remember the "common mercies" of which through another year we have been partakers. Our very senses are so many curious inlets by which pleasures, more or less vivid, come thronging in from the wide world around us. Continued health. Senses and faculties marvellously kept from injury. The happiness of our homes; specially to be remembered at this season. When we call upon the living to praise God, we have much more to show for the demand than the bare fact that God lets them live. He lets most of them live happily. He causes their cup to run over with blessings. He does all this, in spite of forgetful-

ness and disobedience on their part that would wear out any other love but His (H. E. I. 2307–2309). Praise God for the "common mercies" of another year.

4. While we live we are on mercy-ground. *That* is the special mercy beyond all our common mercies. Life, while it lasts, connects us with all that is blessed and glorious in the scheme of salvation. While we are here, "there is but a step between us and death;" but while we are here, too, the door stands wide open through which we may pass into the presence-chamber of our King. *While you are here*, if you will make Christ your friend, sin may be cast out, and the blessed Spirit of truth become your daily Teacher, and your future years be all rich in blessing and bright with hope. Praise God for the prolongation to you of this great opportunity, and embrace it now! Let the new year find you serving Christ.

5. Living saints, as well as spared sinners, should praise God for His preserving mercy. They have had fresh opportunities for serving God and for growth in grace. They have no righteousness of their own wherein to stand before God, and never will have; but talents improved and laid out for God will bring a blessing. He is too bountiful a Master to let any of His servants work for nought. Heaven itself is not alike to all, though it shall be satisfying to the meanest child in God's family. The disciple whom Jesus specially loved leant on His bosom at the Last Supper; and at the marriage-supper, when all the guests shall be assembled from many lands, they who have attained to the goodliest stature in their days of conflict shall sit nearest to the King, and wear the brightest crowns (H. E. I. 2751–2753, 3288; P. D. 412, 1752). Every year is a fresh sowing-time for a more abundant harvest.

6. Some among you have special reasons for saying with Hezekiah, "The living," &c. (1.) This strain belongs to the aged man or woman, who has already lived beyond the allotted term of human life. In your feebleness, God has carried you through another stage. Beyond your expectation, perhaps, you have seen another Christmas. Many are the mercies of one year, but when they come to be multiplied by near four-score, what an array we have then! Praise the Lord! (2.) Some before me, while the year was running out, thought they should never see the end of it. Like Hezekiah, you prayed for life when death seemed to be close upon you. God restored your life to you. What have you done since to show yourself grateful for that mercy? Have a care that your mercies do not make your case worse. If they do not melt, they harden.

7. If the living should praise God, how largely is He defrauded of His due! We are surrounded with living men. Each one of these has a fresh grant of life with each day's sun-rising. What a tide of praise should be going up unceasingly to His throne! Do we find the world so full of praise? Alas! no; if praise be the sign of life, we seem to be walking among the tombs. God is forgotten in His own world. While common friends are thanked for trifling favours, the Giver of mercies, repeated with every breath, is to many of us an unheeded stranger. — *John Hampden Gurney, M.A.: Sermons, chiefly on Old Testament Histories*, pp. 297–312.

Hezekiah's Strength and Weakness.

xxxix. 1, 2. *At that time Merodach-baladan, &c.*

A study of the character of Hezekiah is profoundly instructive. The sacred writers impartially present him to us in his strength and in his weakness.

I. Hezekiah in his strength.

He was in the full sense of the word a good king (2 Kings xviii. 3, 5). He was conspicuous—1. For his religious zeal. Though, politically, it was a hazardous thing to do, he utterly abolished idolatry in his kingdom.

2. For his religious wisdom (2 Kings xviii. 4) (α). 3. For his strong faith. This was shown especially in his conduct in the matter of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib. When we consider these things, we may well understand the high praise given to Hezekiah; certainly there were few kings like him; perhaps none who exhibited a ripeness of religious knowledge and a strength of character so remarkably superior to the times in which he lived.

II. HEZEKIAH IN HIS WEAKNESS.

The weakness of his character was displayed—1. When the king of Babylon sent messengers and a present to him to congratulate him on his recovery from his illness. Then he must needs take them over his house and his armoury, and parade before them all the strength of his dominions (2 Kings xx. 12–13). It was natural and right that he should be pleased with the conduct of the king of Babylon; it was gratifying to him personally; it augured well for the future, as concerning his kingdom, that he should be on good terms with the king of Babylon, now rising into power; but it was unworthy of him to lose his self-possession in the manner described. (1.) He was evidently overcome for the nonce by silly feelings of vanity. He seems to have thought that inasmuch as the king of Babylon had considered him worthy of the compliment of sending to him, he on his part must show that he was indeed a very magnificent king, as the king of Babylon had no doubt heard that he was. (2.) His vanity caused him to forget how little service his armoury and his treasures had been to him in the hour of peril (H. E. I. 3998, 4000, 4001, 4011). (3.) His vanity caused him to forego an opportunity of honouring God and of instructing his neighbours in Divine truth (β). Doubtless it was his failure in duty in this respect that brought upon him so severe a rebuke (vers. 3–7). 2. The weakness of his character had already manifested itself in his conduct during his illness. In the prospect of death his strength of mind quite broke down (ch. xxxviii.) But there was a difference: in the other case he acted unworthily of his knowledge; in this case he was weak because he was, compared with ourselves, weak in religious privileges. He looked to his grave with such melancholy feelings because he could not clearly see a life beyond it. The answer of the great riddle of humanity had been guessed by many before Christ, but His resurrection made the truth clear (2 Tim. i. 10; H. E. I. 3415). If it were not for the light which our Lord has thrown into the grave, we should mourn like Hezekiah, and our eyes would fail as did his. Having more light than he had, it is our duty to live a nobler life than he did, and not to be cowards in prospect of death (H. E. I. 1570–1643).—*Harvey Goodwin, M.A.: Plain Parish Sermons*, Third Series, pp. 78–92.

(α.) Amongst other idolatrous forms of worship which he destroyed, he broke in pieces the brazen serpent which Moses had made in the wilderness (2 Kings xviii. 4). Many men would have been ready to destroy all the heathen forms of idolatry; they would have made no peace with Baal, or Dagon, or any other gods of the nations, but they would have hesitated to destroy a relic of the life of Israel in the wilderness; they would have thought it sacrilegious to break up an image which Moses himself had made, and they would have reasoned that the religious feelings of the people were so entwined about this memorial of their early days, that it would do more harm than good to violate their feelings, and take away that which excited in their minds religious thoughts. If a king of Judah had so argued, it would not have been right to confound him with the mere rabble of idolaters. If Hezekiah had destroyed all other forms of idolatry and left this remaining, we could easily have found an excuse for his conduct; but forasmuch as he took a higher view of his duty, we are bound to give him credit for that higher view, and to remark his spiritual discernment. Hezekiah was not deceived by any flimsy arguments about the sacred nature of the relic which the people adored; it was a cause of idolatry, that was enough. It had been sacred once. In the wilderness, when it was held up as an object upon which the people might gaze, it would have been a sacrilege to mutilate it; but now it was but "a piece of brass," and if that piece of brass be the centre of a system of idolatry, there is but one safe course, and that is to destroy it.—*Goodwin.*

(β.) If his purpose was to impress upon the Babylonians the greatness of his strength, the

story of the destruction of Sennacherib would have answered his purpose much better. If Hezekiah had taken the ambassadors to the Temple, and told them how he had spread Sennacherib's letter before the invisible presence of his God in that holy house, and how he had prayed that the designs of his enemy might be brought to nought, and how that eventually the Assyrians had all either perished or fled, the men of Babylon would have been far more impressed with the power of Hezekiah, believing as they would that he was under the protection of an unseen Hand, than they possibly could be by the mere vulgar display of treasures and armour, which their own country could show in abundance, and which was the very thing calculated to excite their desire of plunder.—*Goodwin.*

Home Life and Influence.

xxxix. 4. *What have they seen in Thy house?*

State briefly the circumstances that gave rise to this question. It evidently suggests to Hezekiah that he has not made the best use of the visit of the Babylonians. He might have turned it to greater account than the gratification of his vanity by displaying his treasures. Instead of magnifying the greatness and glory of God, and thus lifting the minds of his visitors to the highest themes, he had only held out a bait to their covetous desires, and tempted them to steal the treasures so vainly displayed. This was to be the result of his folly (ver. 6). This is how we miss the great opportunities of our life. There come to us golden seasons when we might bear valuable testimony for God; but we have some petty, personal desires of our own to carry out, and they pass away unimproved. Then comes the prophetic message, borne by our own conscience, that the plan we adopted to gratify our improper desires will only lead us to confusion and unhappiness.

The extent to which Hezekiah came under the censure of God in this matter we shall not now further consider. We shall extend the application of this question to the matter of *home life and home influence.* So it has a bearing on all of us. "What have they seen in *thy* house?"

I. It should be seen that our home is the common centre of attraction for all the family (P. D. 1828–1830, 1836).

II. In the home each member of the family should be seen faithfully discharging the duties of his or her relationship to it; husbands, wives, fathers, &c.

III. It should be seen that every Christian gift and grace is carefully cultivated. "For Christ's sake," should be the motto of the whole family. In all they do, every member of it should seek to display love such as He manifested when He dwelt among us: His love was patient, magnanimous, sympathetic. This is the way to make the humblest home happy (P. D. 1823, 1834, 1838, 1839).

Closing Reflections.—1. If we do not thus exhibit Christianity at home, it may be questioned whether we possess it at all (H. E. I. 2994). 2. If others know that there is no practical Christianity displayed by us at home, they will rightly set but little value upon our religious performances abroad. 3. It is from the culture of home life that our hopes are to spring with regard to the national life. In the home lurk the disorders that disturb society. The true way to bring those disorders to an end is to endeavour to make the homes of our land the nurseries of every Christian grace and virtue. 4. Let us aim at the accomplishment of the needful national reforms, by each of us doing what we can to make *our own home* all that it ought to be.—*William Manning.*

Hezekiah Tried.

xxxix. 8. *Then said Hezekiah, &c.*

In the narrative connected with the text we find much in Hezekiah to be avoided and much worthy of imitation.

I. We find Hezekiah in great affliction. He had recently escaped from great public and national calamity; he is speedily involved in private and personal suffering (ch. xxxviii. 1). "He was sick," and Isaiah was sent to prepare him for death. He was greatly alarmed at the approach of death (ch. xxxviii. 9–14). How different from St. Paul (Phil. i. 23). He lived in a dark and imperfect dispensation; few then had clear views of the world to come (2 Tim. i. 10). Hezekiah's faith failed him greatly, and he clung to life with pertinacity.

II. In his trouble he sought the Lord (ch. xxxviii. 2, 3). He made solemn vows of what he would do if spared (ch. xxxviii. 15). When partially restored, he renewed his vows (ch. xxxviii. 19). Thus believers in every kind of trouble should seek comfort of God in earnest prayer; nor is it improper then solemnly to give ourselves to God, and renew our vows. We are encouraged to do this by the speed with which a gracious answer was sent to Hezekiah (ch. xxxviii. 4, 5). Isaiah was hardly gone out from pronouncing the judgment when he was sent back with a message of mercy (2 Kings xx. 45). How wonderfully compassionate is God to His feeble people! Their poor, trembling prayers, uttered in fear and doubting, are heard and answered. He not only hears prayer, but answers directly (Dan. ix. 20–23).

III. We find him speedily forgetful of the mercy he had received. Ambassadors arrive at his court. Whence and for what purpose? (vers. 1, 2). What an opportunity for him to redeem his vows, and to proclaim the power and goodness of God to these heathens! Alas! he shows them all his riches, &c., but of God and His temple He says nothing. Flattered and betrayed by the world (vers. 3, 4), what a heart his and ours must be! *How could this be?* We are told (2 Chron. xxxii. 31) that such is man when left to himself! We are never in greater danger than after seasons of great mercy and special providences (H. E. I. 4902–4904).

IV. He humbly received the rebuke that was sent to him (text). Here the habit of his mind appeared: he had fallen into the sin of vanity, but humility and resignation to the will of God, especially to His afflictive dispensations, were his usual characteristics. A clear evidence of true godliness, meekly and cheerfully to submit to fatherly correctives. Aaron (Lev. x. 1–3), Eli (1 Sam. iii. 18), the bereaved mother (2 Kings iv. 26), David (Ps. cxix. 75).

LESSONS.—1. *Let us cultivate humility, watchfulness, and jealousy of ourselves* (H. E. I. 4883, 4901). 2. *Let us not be disconsolate because we are conscious of weakness and unworthiness.* The errors and failings of the best of men are left on record, not to extenuate our sins, but to save us from despair. They were men of like passions with ourselves—the same infirmities and corruptions—yet God bore with them, and saved them out of all their distresses. Let us therefore "hope to the end," and "patiently continue in well-doing," believing that we shall be "more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us" (H. E. I. 1117, 2376).—*F. Close, A.M.: Fifty-two Sketches of Sermons*, pp. 52–55.

SUBMISSION UNDER GOD'S REBUKE.

xxxix. 8. *Then said Hezekiah, &c.*

I. THE REBUKE.

The character of Hezekiah is well known. One of the very best of the kings of Judah (2 Kings xviii. 3–7). Nevertheless even in this excellent man there were moral weaknesses which were displayed when his physical malady was removed. The arrival of the Babylonian ambassadors excited within him hopes of political advantages arising from alliance with the idolatrous king whom they represented,

and in order to impress the envoys with a sense of his importance, he made an ostentatious display of his wealth (ver. 2). This displeased the Lord. Why? 1. Because Hezekiah let slip a favourable opportunity of making known to the heathen the glory and the goodness of the God of Israel (a). 2. Because his ostentation made it plain that pride was usurping the throne of his heart (2 Chron. xxxii. 26).

But this was not the habitual frame of Hezekiah's mind; he was a good man, and therefore God lovingly chastened him. If it had been the wicked Ahab who had done this deed, the Lord might possibly have taken no notice of it; He might have left that idolatrous sinner to have followed his own devices. But seeing this evil spirit begin to show itself in a pious and humble man, the Lord mercifully and savingly interposed to check it in the beginning (vers. 3–7).

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS RECEIVED.

Sharp as was the rebuke sent him by Isaiah, Hezekiah so received it as to give a rare example of pious and cheerful resignation (text). Both parts of his reply are remarkable. 1. "*Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken.*" None but a child of God could have used this language in sincerity, under such trying circumstances. But he has such faith in God, that although it is impossible for him to foresee what wickedness his posterity would commit, he knows that the decree will be found to be righteous (1 Sam. iii. 18). But doubtless he meant something more than submission to God's sovereignty; he meant to acknowledge the goodness of the Lord to himself, of which this very rebuke was a new manifestation (H. E. I. 190–196, 162–165). 2. "*He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.*" That is, God hath been pleased to inform me that my children are to be carried into captivity and to suffer much affliction; but in my grief for this, I must not forget to thank Him for His tender mercies to myself. He has declared that I shall have peace, and this is far more than I deserve.

APPLICATION.—1. We may learn what exceeding sinfulness and immense danger there often is in sins which we are apt to pass over as trifles, and hardly to notice in ourselves (H. E. I. 4897, 4898, 4516). 2. Remark an inestimable privilege of the children of God's love: they may fall into the very same troubles as their ungodly neighbours, but in the one case calamity is the angry lash of the law, in the other it is the faithful rebuke of an anxious Father. 3. From the history of God's dealings with Hezekiah we may infer what must be the wisest wish for any man to make, viz., that God would take us into His holy keeping and choose our inheritance for us. If we were left to determine for ourselves, some would choose one thing, and some another. Yet "sorrow is better than laughter;" and the history of Hezekiah is a proof of it (H. E. I. 211, 3986, 3998–4001). 4. If sin have brought rebuke upon you, search and try your ways, that you may see what your transgression and weakness is; and then accept the chastening of the Lord as a token of His love (H. E. I. 144–147). 5. Whatsoever may have befallen you, remember always that the mercies which remain are far greater than you deserve; and that in the day of prosperity, no less than in the evil day, there is need for perseverance and watchfulness (H. E. I. 4888–4890).—*Archdeacon Bather: Sermons on Old Testament Histories*, pp. 275–285.

(a.) If, instead of showing them his treasures, he had related to these idolatrous Chaldeans, who were worshippers of the sun, the account of his marvellous cure, and especially the miracle by which the shadow was made to go ten degrees backward on the dial, he might have been the means of bringing them to the knowledge of the true God who made the heavens, and of convincing them that He was master even of that glorious luminary, which they ignorantly adored instead of its Creator.—*Bather.*

ADDITIONAL OUTLINES.

INSTINCT FOLLOWED—REASON DISREGARDED.

i. 3. *The ox knoweth his owner, &c.*

"We are wise." So spake the Greek of old in the pride of his intellectual powers, and so speak many in our own day who have imbibed the spirit of the Greek. Reason is a wonderful faculty, and there have not been wanting, in any age of the world, those who have felt elated by their successful exercise of it. It can look before and after, deriving experience from the past and suggesting provision against the future. It can explore the hidden secrets of Nature and render the world of matter subservient to man; it can turn in upon itself and speculate upon its own processes; nay, it can teach us something of the existence and attributes of the Most High. Such being the triumphs of reason, it can hardly be matter of wonder that the wise men of this world plume themselves on the attainment of those triumphs.

The vainglorying of men, however, whatever form it may assume, is abomination in the sight of God. In the scheme of salvation which God has devised there is no room for boasting either of our moral or intellectual endowments: "It is excluded." That scheme is essentially humbling in its character; it is so constructed as to shut out pride at every cranny where it could possibly insinuate itself; it is such as to stop every mouth and bring in all the world guilty before God. And not only guilty, but blind also. He will have all the world convicted in the court of Conscience of folly, no less than of sin. In order to bring His people to this conviction, he expostulates with them in many passages of His Word on the vainglorious boasts they were in the habit of uttering, shows their utter emptiness, and exhibits the inconsistency of man's moral conduct with his pretensions to wisdom and enlightenment (cf. Jer. viii. 7, 8).

Our text implies two things—1. That the relation subsisting between the brute creation and man is in some measure similar to that which subsists between man and God; and, 2. That the acknowledgment made by dumb animals of their relation to mankind strangely contrasts with the natural man's refusal of acknowledgment to God.

I. **We are to compare the relations subsisting between an inferior and a superior creature with those subsisting between a superior and the Creator.** Note, though these relations may be susceptible of comparison, and may be used to lift up our minds to apprehension of the truth, there is an insufficiency in the lower relation to type out the higher. The distance between man and the inferior creatures, if great, is measurable; whereas the distance between finite man and the Infinite God is incalculable.

The dumb creature recognises the master whose property it is: "The ox knoweth his owner." What constitutes man's right of ownership in the ox? Simply the fact that he bought it. He did not create it. If he supports its life, it is only by providing it with a due supply of food, not by ministering to it momentarily the breath which it draws, nor by regulating the springs of its animal economy. That is the sum of his ownership. *But what constitutes God's right of ownership in us, His intelligent and rational creatures?*

1. We are the work of His hands. Creation constitutes a property in all

our faculties and a claim to our services which no creature hath or can have in another.

2. Our property is most entire, our claim of right most indisputable, in those things which, having been once deprived of them by fraud or violence, we have subsequently paid a price to recover. The flocks and herds in the possession of civilised European settlers in uncivilised countries are often swept away by a barbarous horde of native freebooters. Imagine, then, a case in which, it being impossible to bring the offenders to justice (by reason of their numbers and strength), the owners of the cattle should effect a ransom of their property by laying down a sum equivalent to its value. Is it not thenceforth theirs by a double claim—the claim of original ownership and the claim of subsequent ransom? Such is the claim which God has over us. That claim, grounded originally upon the fact of creation, has been confirmed, enlarged, extended a thousandfold by the fact of redemption (1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19).

3. Our text suggests another detail of the claims which our Heavenly Owner has upon our allegiance: "The ass knoweth his master's crib." He knows the manger at which he is fed and the hand that feeds him. Here is a palpable claim upon regard, although by no means so high as those previously advanced. It is a claim appreciable by the senses, capable of being understood and responded to by the mere animal nature. In palliation of man's neglect of those claims of God which are established by creation and redemption, it might haply be pleaded that he is a creature of the senses, and that the facts of creation and redemption are not cognisable by them. These stupendous facts are transacted and past. But even this paltry justification is entirely cut off by the fact here implied, that man is indebted to God for his daily maintenance, for the comfort and the convenience even of his animal life (α)

Observe, also, that it is not the brute creation *in a savage state* whose relations towards man are here drawn into comparison with the relations of man towards God. To illustrate his argument the inspired writer has chosen instances from the domestic animals, who share man's daily toils, live as his dependants, and are familiarised by long habit with their master's abode and ways of life. In drawing out the contrast, he does not mention mankind generally, but "*Israel* doth not know, *my people* doth not consider." It were in some measure excusable that the heathens should refuse acknowledgment to the living God, whom they know not. But what shall we urge in extenuation of the indifference of "Israel," who from his very infancy has been of the household of God, domesticated by the hearth of the Universal Parent, and furnished with every means of access to His presence?

II. A contrast is drawn between the acknowledgment made by dumb animals of their relation to their owners and Israel's refusal of acknowledgment to his God.

The cattle "know" or recognise the voice of their owner; his call they heed, in his steps they follow; irrational creatures though they be, they are not insensible to their benefactor's fond caress. What a cutting reproof of the insensibility of God's people!

1. They recognise not God in His warnings, whether they be addressed to them as individuals or to the nation of which they are members. Afflictions arrest them not in their career of vanity and sin. Judgments stir them not out of their lethargy of indifference. They hear not, see not, God in them.

2. They do not acknowledge God in His mercies. God's blessings of Nature and Providence are accepted by them as a matter of course. If regarded at all, they are traced no higher than to secondary causes. The continual experience of them renders them not one whit more submissive to the yoke of God's service. As to the higher blessings of forgiveness and

grace, they feel no need of them, and evince no gratitude for them.

Want of consideration is the root and reason of this strange insensibility. It is not that "Israel" lacks the faculty of apprehending God, but he will not be at pains to exercise that faculty. It is not that he lacks a speculative knowledge of the truths now set forth, but that he does not lay to heart that knowledge, nor allow it its due weight.—*E. M. Goulburn, D.C.L.: Sermons*, pp. 153–181.

(a.) Of this fact a strongly figurative but very beautiful statement is contained in a passage of Hosea—a passage remarkably illustrative of that before us, inasmuch as there also the imagery is drawn from man's dealings with the cattle. "I drew them," says God, "with the cords of a man, with bonds of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." "*I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws.*" The owner of the ox does not overtask his strength, does not cause him to toil in the furrow without intermission. At the approach of evening the faithful animal is driven homewards, and freed from the shackles of the galling and burdensome yoke. An image this of God's dealing with His human children. Our every period of refreshment and repose, of ease and relaxation from toil, is from the unseen hand of our heavenly Owner. Those many fractions of comfort and happiness which lighten the load of life—those numerous (although momentary) glimpses of sunshine which relieve the plodding routine of our daily career—those flowers with which the path of the great majority is more or less strewed: the innocent sally of mirth, the smile of affection, the expression of sympathy, the cheering word of encouragement from those whose encouragement is justly valued — these, like all other mercies, are from God, and (though these be but a small part of what we have to be thankful for) are designed to draw us towards Him in bonds of gratitude and love.

"*And I laid meat unto them.*" By those who avail themselves of their services, the cattle are supplied with provender. God not only called us into being, but maintains us in being. He it is who gives us our daily bread, and spreads our board with food convenient for us; for food, for health, for continuance of life our dependence upon Him is absolute. By means of these and similar mercies it is that God establishes a claim to the gratitude and devotedness even of those among His rational creatures who have most deeply buried themselves in the things of time and sense, and whose hearts seem to be stirred by no breath of spiritual aspiration, and troubled by no prospect of eternity.—*Goulburn.*

The Cessation of War.

ii. 4. *They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

A prediction of times yet to come. It has never yet been fulfilled. It is true that when the religion of Christ came to the world it came with the spirit and principles of an all-pacific dispensation ("*On earth peace, good-will towards men*"); and true that, in the degree of its actual prevalence, this has been the effect. But how far is this from anything adequate to the terms of the prediction, which exhibit a bright and ample idea of this spirit and tendency of Christianity realised, reduced to fact, on the great scale!

I. War has been a prominent character of all ages.

1. Man, when he came fresh from his Creator's hands, must have had in his soul the principle of all kind affections (Gen. i. 27), a state of feeling that would have been struck with horror at the thought of inflicting suffering. Yet in the first family of man war and slaughter began. Men may argue and quibble against our notion of "*the fall*," but here was fall enough! and demonstration enough!

2. War prevailed among the antediluvians (Gen. vi. 5, 12). We are told of some that "became mighty men, men of renown." How? Partly perhaps in a war against savage beasts, but far more in the exploits of that "violence" which filled the earth, and doomed it to be overwhelmed.

3. War prevailed among the race descended from Noah. It was by the descendants of the only faithful friend and servant of the Almighty found on earth that the desolated world was to be repeopled, and we might have hoped for a better race, if human nature

were intrinsically good, or corrigible by the most awful dispensations. But the Flood could not cleanse the nature of man, nor the awful memory of it repress the coming forth of selfishness, pride, ambition, anger, and revenge. (1.) The history of the Jews is to a large extent a history of wars. (2.) The history of the other races is a history of their conflicts with each other, of a terrible process by which the smaller states were absorbed in others, until they were all included in the Roman empire. How many millions of human beings were destroyed in the process! (3.) Since that period the history of the world has been to a large extent written in blood. (α)

Reflections:—1. What a state of the spirit of mankind is here disclosed to us! 2. What a state of Christianity, or to any real prevalence of it, among the nations denominated Christian! 3. How necessary that all religious persons, especially tutors and parents, should set themselves systematically, as opportunities offer, to counterwork that maddening enchantment of the "glory" of war; of war considered merely as the field of great exploits. Let them strive to break up, in the view of young and ardent minds, this splendid, pestilent delusion about heroes, conquests, fame, and glory.

II. **War is not necessarily sinful, nor are those engaged in it to be always condemned.** Defensive war does not violate Christian principles. Nay, it is sometimes a duty. (β) An opposite opinion is held by some who rest on the literal and extreme construction of a few expressions, such as "Resist not evil," "Give place to wrath," "Love your enemies," "To him that smiteth thee on one cheek, turn also the other." These interdict revenge. But their unqualified literal interpretation requires that Christianity should subject mankind universally to the unrestrained will of whoever is the most unjust and wicked; should teach that so long as there are men who have more of Satan and Moloch in them than the rest, and are intent on practising oppression and cruelty, it is the absolute duty of Christians, as such, individually and nationally, to let them do it,—at least rather than resist them in such a way as to endanger their persons. This would be a delightful doctrine to all the tyrants, bigots, slave-drivers, robbers, and murderers! But the magistrate is not *so* to leave the matter to God's disposal, or to refrain from using the "sword" against the doers of evil. And the government of a nation is but a magistracy on a large scale.

But those principles upon which a Christian casuist would justify war, under certain possible circumstances, would not justify perhaps one in twenty of the wars that have been waged. Very rare has been the instance of a war, on either side, strictly and purely defensive, of either the nation itself or any other endangered or oppressed people depending on its protection. Hence—

III. **We rejoice over this prediction that war is to cease on the earth.**

1. This prediction spreads a visionary scene before us so new, strange, and delightful, that nothing but prophecy, and faith in the divine power and goodness, could enable us to expect its realisation. (γ)

2. It is difficult to conceive the practicability of its attainment. For it is something intrinsic in the soul and nature of man, throughout the whole race, that war has sprung from. *There* is the hot and terrible element that has burst abroad in so many thunders. And yet it is *man* that is to be universally at peace! How can it be? (2 Kings vii. 2.) Vicious selfishness, ambition, envy, rivalry, rapacity, revenge, these are the things in men that cause wars between them, on the small scale and the great. How can these ever be so repressed, subdued, extirpated, that all war shall cease?

3. Certainly not by experience, philosophy, or civilisation. (δ)

4. Nothing will operate efficaciously to this grand effect that does not go deep into the constitution of men's

souls, and quell internally those fatal passions which have perpetuated external war. And that is what cannot be done by any civilisation, national refinement, science, or even an enlightened theoretical policy. All these may be but like fair structures and gardens extended over a ground where volcanic fires are in a temporary slumber below. All these may be shattered and exploded by some mighty impulse of ambition or some blast of revengeful anger. No; there must be a greater, nobler power brought into prevalence among mankind. Nothing springing merely from the action of the human mind can suffice. It must be something coming from heaven. CHRISTIANITY is the appointed and qualified agent.

IV. It is credible that Christianity will cause wars to cease upon the earth.

1. It has accomplished something in this direction already. To *it* is mainly attributable the mitigation of ferocity and exterminatory rage, so evident in modern wars. We dare not assert even that it may not have prevented some wars.

2. It is essentially a peacemaker. Look at its genuine tendency, as displayed on the smaller scale, in a family, a neighbourhood, a district: a family in a constant state of hostility within itself, but at length the members of it are converted by the religion of Jesus Christ. The consequence how happy! (H. E. I. 1126.)

3. Precisely as it progresses among any people it will produce a distaste for war. (ε)

4. Consequently its progress among the nations is a progressive abolition of war. Every extension of this blessed religion is so much gained against war; quenching still another and another spark of infernal fire; repressing in some more minds those evil passions which are the prompters and the essential power of war.

5. Christianity *is* progressing among the nations.

6. Consequently it is reasonable to cherish the hope of a scene of universal peace (P. D. 2675).

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.—1. The universal cessation of war means much more than merely the cessation of much mischief. Think what will be effected when the wealth, time, labour, art, ingenuity, of truly Christian nations are directed to the noblest purposes of peace! 2. Extirpate the war-spirit from your own breast. The selfish, proud, arrogant, envious, revengeful, are essentially of the *war tribe*, however little they have to do with actual war, however much they may condemn and profess to deplore it. Such individuals are not fit for that future terrestrial "kingdom of heaven."—*John Foster: Lectures, Second Series*, pp. 142–173.

(α.) What a vision of destruction! Think of all that tormented and desolated the earth during the long period of the fall of the Roman Empire,—of that inundation of ravage and death, the progress and utmost extension of the Mahomedan power; of the mighty account of slaughter in the Spanish conquest of America; of the almost incessant wars among the states of civilised Europe down nearly to the present hour. Think even of the bloody wars within our own island, especially on the border between its northern and southern divisions; the hundreds of remaining fortresses, monumental of war. And to complete the account—as if the whole solid earth were not wide enough—the sea has been coloured with blood, and received into its dark gulf myriads of the slain, as if it could not destroy enough by its tempests and wrecks!—*Foster.*

(β.) About four or five years since, our Government had a war with the Pindarees—a terrible assemblage of outlaws, robbers, and murderers, to the number of fifty thousand, occupying a strong and almost inaccessible tract on the northern frontier. Thence with impetuous rapidity, they rushed down, all horsemen, on the country, inhabited by a population of cultivators; seized whatever could easily be carried off, and with furious eagerness demolished, burnt, destroyed the rest. But far more than this, they were universally possessed with the spirit of murder; they killed the people without regard to sex or age. Not only so, but when sufficiently at leisure for such amusement, they inflicted excruciating tortures previous to death.

Now, when the Governor-General had intelligence of this—*what was he to do? what*, acting as a Christian? *Nothing?* What, as a great magistrate, did he "bear the sword" for? What was he Governor at all for? To live in splendid state, and number and tax the people? Or was he to direct that prayer should be made in the churches for something

very like a miracle? And on failure of that, prayers that the wretched people he governed might be all meekly resigned to their fate? and that even should the fell and fiendish legion, being unresisted, choose to pursue their way all down to Calcutta, all the people in their tract that could not escape, and at last himself and the people of the city, might be enabled calmly to submit to a sovereign dispensation of Providence?

He did not do this. He chose rather to act on the rule of his appointment, to be "a terror to evil-doers," "a minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon them that do evil" (Rom. xiii. 4). But if war is in all possible cases wrong, he perpetrated an enormous crime against Christianity in marching his armies with a celerity unparalleled in that climate, and encountering, intercepting, and exterminating the murderers, so that the surviving people could feel themselves in peace.

. . . . . .

Put the stronger case of an immense host of northern barbarians being landed on our coasts (Tartars, Cossacks, Calmucks), and joined there by the legions of the Popish states, what would happen if we all, as Christians, judged it wrong and wicked to fight? Unless, indeed, we should suppose a divided opinion in the nation with respect to the Christian principle of the case, and that so a very large and powerful proportion was resolute to resist in all the array and action of war. Now, while with the utmost sacrifice and peril they were doing so, and suppose successfully, what a remarkable phenomenon would be presented! namely, the other division of the people deploring these very proceedings and successes by which their houses are saved from ravage and desolation,—deploring them as an awful outrage against Christian rectitude,—praying for the instant *conversion* of these deluded men to a right apprehension of Christian duty,—that they might immediately throw away their arms and allow the barbarian inundation to burst forward! Or, having failed in this prayer (and a mighty victory having finally cleared the land of the infernal irruption), then lamenting that a dreadful national violation of Christian principles had been irretrievably consummated! And as success purchased by crime can in the result be little else than a calamity and a judgment, they might be alarmed and dismayed to find themselves still in possession of their former freedom of worship, of speech, and of action, and of all their rights as citizens.—*Foster.* (Written in 1823.)

(γ.) It is difficult to realise the fact to our imagination. No fighting on the face of the whole earth! no armies, nor military profession, nor garrisons, nor arms, nor banners, nor proclamations! No leagues, offensive or defensive; no guarding of frontiers; no fortresses; no military prisons! No celebrating of victories in gaudy pomps and revelries for the vulgar, or in prostituted poetry for the more refined! A wondering what kind of times those could be in which mankind accounted it the highest glory to kill one another! Truly this is a state of things we are ill prepared even to conceive!—*Foster.*

(δ.) Such things will be *included*, certainly, in whatever process can and shall reduce the world at length to peace; they will be taken as accessories and subsidiaries to the Master Power in operation. But whoever would reckon on such things alone should be strangely mortified, one thinks, in adverting to many facts of old and recent history. What, for example, is he to do with the history of Greece? or of the Italian Republics? Or nearer home, Britain and France account themselves the most enlightened and civilised states in the world: have they not been, with all their might, fighting and slaying each other and neighbouring nations for centuries, almost without intermission, down to this time? In the French revolutionary government, which, after a time, became essentially warlike, there were more philosophers, speculative, literary men, than ever in any other. In our own country, through the last half-century, the enlightened and civilised people (often so described and lauded at least) have needed but a little excitement, at any time, to rush out into war. Our institutions of learning, and even theology, have constantly abetted the spirit. An ever-flowing, impetuous stream there has been of oratory, poetry, and even pulpit declamation, mingling with and inspiriting the coarse torrent of the popular zeal for battles and victories. We have had both poets and divines actually sending the most immoral heroes to heaven, on the mere strength of their falling in patriotic combat. All this tells but ill for the efficacy of civilisation, literature, refinement, and the instruction of experience to promote the spirit of peace, without the predominance of some mightier cause.—*Foster.*

(ε.) What will the natural consequence be in respect to war? Will it not be coldness towards that pernicious phantasm, martial "glory";—a loathing of that sort of eloquence and poetry that are making a god of it;—a hatred of the very name of ambitious conquerors;—horror at the image of vast masses of men waiting to destroy one another;—a sense of the flagrant absurdity, as well as iniquity, of avenging some little wrong at the cost of so mighty a portion and variety of misery;—and a faith that Providence has not so abandoned the world that we are not to wait one moment for any interposition from it in favour of justice, but, the instant the scales of justice are poised, we must throw in the sword? Such would be the spirit and temper of a nation predominantly Christian.—*Foster.*

God Exalted in the Great Day.

(*Advent Sermon.*)

ii. 17. *The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*

Two questions: What is "that day?" How shall the Lord then be exalted?

I. "*That day.*" "The first five verses of this chapter foretell the kingdom of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and their admission into the Church. From the sixth verse to the end is foretold the punishment of the unbelieving Jews for their idolatrous practices, their confidence in their own strength, and distrust of God's protection; and, moreover, the destruction of idolatry in consequence of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom."—*Lowth.* But here, as in many other portions of Scripture, a larger and remoter meaning looms beyond and behind the first sense of the expressions, which would otherwise be too big and swelling for the actual interpretation of them. Compare the description in which the text twice occurs with the almost parallel passages in chap. v. 14–16. How magnificent! What startling terms! What emphatic iterations! Surely a want of fitness and congruity would almost be felt if expressions such as these referred *only* to some temporal calamity of the Jewish nation; surely we cannot mistake in looking onward to some mightier catastrophe, to some final exaltation of God and abasement of all creatures. By "*that* day," therefore, we mean what is elsewhere called "*the* day," "the great day," "the day of judgment," "the great and terrible day of the Lord"—the consummation of all things.

When that day shall come I do not know, and I am content to remain in ignorance. It may come suddenly, without warning, unannounced. Then it is for men always to have their lamps burning and their hearts in readiness, lest they be taken by surprise. It may come with great signs preceding and accompanying it. Then it is for men, according to their capacity, to note and discern those signs. It is the very uncertainty connected with it that is to make us watchful (Matt. xxiv. 36, 42). We are to be vigilant and observant, without pretending to determine what God has left unrevealed. Such attempts have in all ages been made, and in all ages have been falsified. The failure of those attempts has not only covered those who made them or believed in them with ridicule, it has brought into discredit the sacred Book which the aim was to expound. It is our first duty and highest interest to be at every moment prepared; but a far other and better preparation may, and must be made for it, than in the futile endeavour to discover its precise date. (α)

Equally unwise is the disposition to specify with a minute particularity the events which are to usher in the great day of the Lord, or the convulsions of nature which shall herald and proclaim it, or the astonishing circumstances with which it shall be arrayed. God has chosen to involve them in a mysterious and solemn indistinctness. In bold and sublime figures the inspired writers have delineated a scene which must stand singular and by itself, without any precedent or parallel, and which, therefore, neither human language can directly express nor human understanding adequately comprehend. Instead of endeavouring to explain the images and symbols employed, prudence will lead us to confine ourselves to the very words of Scripture, such as Dan. xii. 2; Joel iii. 11–15; 2 Cor. v. 10; Matt. xxv. 31, 32; Rev. xx. 11–13; 1 Cor. xv. 51–53. (β) On these declarations we should meditate with serious and chastened minds, for if Scripture be true these words cannot be without a real and solemn meaning, and that meaning can only be that

there shall be a day in which the world shall be judged by God in Christ, and that from before the Divine tribunal the good and the evil, separated from each other, shall depart to destinies final and irreversible (P. D. 2109).

II. *In that day the Lord alone shall be exalted.*

1. How is this possible? Is not God always exalted far above all blessing and praise? He will then be exalted in the sense in which He is now said to be glorified. He will be exalted in the visible homage and submission of an assembled universe. He will be exalted by the full manifestation of His attributes, in their unclouded and effulgent lustre, by the exhibition, before men and angels, of His omnipotence and justice, His wisdom and truth, His love and mercy, of the holiness of His law, the equity of His administration, the abundance of His grace, so that all hearts shall be bowed down at His footstool, and every mouth shall be stopped.

2. In that day God shall be exalted *alone*.

(1) The text may lead our minds to other deities as opposed to Jehovah. They shall indeed be gone; in that day they shall be seen to be less than the least of all their worshippers.

(2) It will be the great day of the disclosure of all things; and all creatures shall see the Lord as He is, and themselves also as they are. Therefore shall all the highest orders of celestial intelligences, the cherubim and seraphim, and all the ranks of existence which may occupy the interval between man and his Maker, veil their faces before His throne; they shall be as nothing in *His* sight. Then shall all creatureship fall low before the one Creator; all derived, dependent being shall shrink into its true dimensions before the Absolute, the Eternal, the I AM.

(3) Even Christ Himself, His office as the Messiah having been accomplished, and His administration of the Church, in His human character, being brought to a close, shall resign His mediatorial sway (1 Cor. xv. 24–28; H. E. I. 985).

(4) But our chief concern, as we are men, is with humanity: "The lofty looks of *man* shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of *man* shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

That day shall indeed declare the impotence of human power, the emptiness of human ambition, the nothingness of human renown. (γ) The very circumstances on account of which men have most lifted themselves up in their lifetime will be the occasions of their profoundest humiliation then.

In that day our sinfulnesses shall sink us into the dust, and cover us with shame and confusion even more than our vanities. Shall any one of us hope then to be exalted, when the memories of us all shall retrace so many sterile and unproductive intentions, so many good impressions never fostered and ripened into fruits of righteousness, so many talents misused by our iniquity, or buried by our idleness? Then there shall be no more concealments, no more deceits, no more false excuses, no more of those pretences, equivocations, subterfuges, and sophisms which our reason is now so fatally ingenious in playing off upon itself (P. D. 661, 2106). Oh, think of these things, and let not your sins be dearer to you than your salvation. Think of them ere the night cometh, and the sun of your probation has quite gone down.

"The Lord *alone* shall be exalted in that day." Will He then confound the righteous with the wicked? As compared with God there shall be no distinctions between men. All men on that great day at the bar of the Omniscient and the All Holy shall have upon them a universal sense of imperfection, unworthiness, insufficiency, nothingness. But as compared with each other there will be immense differences between them. It is one purpose of the great day to make manifest to all orders of being the infinite value and superiority of moral goodness, the infinite preciousness of a holy obedience above and beyond all else; then God, who sees it in secret,

will reward it openly. When the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the people that forget God, the righteous shall shine forth as the stars of heaven. Therefore estimate all things *now* as you will estimate them then. Lean less upon earth and man and the things present, set your affections more upon the things to come, upon heaven, and upon the Ruler of heaven. Cultivate diligently those dispositions which are pleasing in His sight. For then, when all social forms shall have vanished away, when all material substances shall have been obliterated, as the shapes in a cloud, and dissipated as the morning dew, your moral temper will abide with you, and your spiritual state, as discerned by the unerring Judge, will decide, and will attend, your immortal destiny (H. E. I. 720).—*James Shergold Boone, M.A.: Sermons*, pp. 359–399.

(α.) During the fifth century Chrysostom expressed himself in language which sounds almost like an anticipation of much that we hear at the present day. "No long time now remains until the consummation; but the world is hastening to its end. This the wars declare, this the afflictions, this the love which hath waxed cold. For as the body, when in its last gasp and near to death, draws to itself ten thousand sufferings; and as when a house is about to fall, many portions are wont to fall beforehand from the roofs and walls; so is the end of the world nigh and at the very doors, and, therefore, ten thousand woes are everywhere scattered abroad" (*Homily* xxxiv.) Towards the close of the tenth century, Bernhard, a hermit of Thuringia, and other persons, spread or encouraged the belief, that after the end of the thousandth year, the fetters of Satan were to be broken; and that, after the reign of Antichrist should be terminated, the world would be consumed by sudden conflagration. This wild and extraordinary delusion pervaded and possessed every rank of society. It seized on nobles, princes, and even bishops, as well as on the common people. Many renounced their pursuits and professions; abandoned their friends and families; gave themselves up to superstitious prayer and terrifying expectations, and made over all their substance to some adjacent church or monastery. Almost all the donations which were made to the Church in this century proceeded from this avowed motive, that the end of the world was drawing near. The form ran, "*Appropinquante jam mundi termino*," &c. Others permitted their lands to lie waste, and their houses to decay; or betook themselves in hasty flight to the shelter of rocks and caverns, as if the temples of nature were destined to preservation amidst the wreck of man and his works.—*Boone.*

(β.) I forbear to expatiate on the phenomena or the tokens which shall be premonitory of the Millennium or of the day of judgment. God has not seen fit, even in Scripture, to withdraw the curtain of obscurity from between us and that supreme future. We may well be content that our apprehensions should be vague, when the language of the Bible is not definite, and when we find rather the sublime and half-luminous gloom with which poetry or painting can invest its delineations, than the sharp and precise outline which the chisel can carve.—*Boone.*

(γ.) What shall they all be, the strong rivalries and contentions, which shall have been hushed in the grave; the towering structures of vanity and earthly hope, which shall have been crushed before the moth; the schemes and plottings, the contrivances and expectations, the struggles and triumphs, which shall have been dropped into the burial-place where the worm is feeding on them! Oh, the thrones and dominions of mortality, the crowns and sceptres, the regal splendours and the imperial sway, how shall they then be reduced to their real and intrinsic insignificance! The victories of the warrior who conquered in a hundred fights, and the projects of the politician, whose statesmanship could grasp the globe; the famous men and heroes of the earth, with the poets who celebrated them, and the historians who recounted their exploits, what shall they be before the word of Omnipotence! The learning and science of the philosophers who framed their system of the universe for the admiration of posterity, what shall they be, before the blaze of illumination which shall be poured upon us in another world! The pageantries of courts and palaces; the banquets and the wine-cups, the spectacles and the entertainments, the mirrors and the lamps, the golden furniture of pomp, and the flowing robe of luxury; the great and the affluent, whose patronage was requested for busy undertakings, who were besieged with flattery and obsequiousness from morning to night; the noble and the beautiful, who gathered homage as they moved; the writers and the orators, whose popularity was unbounded, and who lived amidst the incense of human applause; they, and all that appertained to them, where and what shall they be, as we stand poor, and naked, and miserable before Him with whom we have to do! They, the heedless and the selfish, swimming in pleasure, who thought that the whole voyage of life was to be like Cleopatra's passage along the Cydnus, one scene of mirth and gorgeousness; of prodigal dissipation and fatal revelry, with soft music and delicate odours floating in the air; what shall become of *them!* How black and cold shall be the cinders of their joy!

All human dynasties will then have crumbled to pieces, and all the gradations in the scale of human rank will then have been blotted out; for all must be dwarfed and prostrated before the ineffable majesty of the Most High God. All other differences must fade when the Divine summits are placed in contrast with them; as from the top of an exceeding high mountain the whole ground beneath is as a level plain, because from that vast altitude all smaller elevations are lost, all minuter inequalities of surface vanish. Human celebrity will then be as a sound, the very echoes of which will have departed. The pompous titles with which the vanity of man was pampered; the distinctions which kings could confer, or heraldry emblazon; privileges of caste, nobility of blood, the pride of ancestry, the blaze of reputation, the splendour of talents, shall then be confounded, one and all, as frivolous toys and trifling baubles. The mighty ones of the earth shall be no more than they who were of the poorest condition; the great shall stand abashed with the mean, the learned with the ignorant, monarchs with their subjects, senators and princes, commanders of fleets and armies, the loftiest and most renowned by the side of the husbandman and the labourer; for what shall they all be in contrast with Him, the Universal Creator, whose dwelling-place is eternity, and to whom belong, throughout all ages, all glory and dominion, sovereignty and praise! —*Boone.*

The Inexcusability and Hopelessness of Unbelief.

v. 4. *What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?*

In a subsequent verse God condescends to explain what is here meant by His "vineyard," so that there might be no doubt as to the scope and import of the passage (ver. 7). God had done everything which could be done for the spiritual culture of His ancient Church (vers. 3, 4). The assertion that "as much had been done as could be done" is very affecting and startling. And if this could be said of the Jewish vineyard, what shall be said of the Christian?

There is a peculiar argument thus suggested, which, wrought out, will show that men are inexcusable in persisting in their unbelief, since nothing more could have been done to win them to the side of righteousness and to turn them to God. Notice carefully *the variety of the arguments addressed in Scripture to the thoughtless and obdurate.* At one time they are attacked with terrors, the picture being set before them of Divine wrath; at another they are acted on by the loving-kindness of God, and allured by the free mercies of the Gospel. In the text it is not precisely either the one or the other of these methods. There is nothing alleged but the greatness of what has been done for us—a greatness such that nothing more can be done, consistently, at least, with that moral accountableness which must regulate the amount of influence which God brings to bear on men. If this be so, if we are not convinced and renewed under the existing instrumentality, there is nothing that can avert from us utter destruction.

But is this so? Review the means provided and proffered for our rescue, and let us see whether any of us can be other than silent. If we were arguing with a man who disbelieved the existence of God, we should probably reason up from the creation to the Creator. Our adversary might challenge us to prove that nothing short of Infinite Power could have built and furnished this planet. It may be allowed that certain results lie beyond human agency, and yet disputed whether they need such an agency as we strictly call Divine. We do not, therefore, maintain that the evidences in creation are the strongest which can be conceived. Hence we should not perhaps feel warranted in saying to the atheist, "What more could have been done" to produce belief in you if you resist all these tokens of God in Nature? But if we cannot say to the atheist, when pointing to the surrounding creation, "What more could have been done that has not been done" for your conviction? we can ply the worldly-minded with this question when pointing to the scheme of salvation through Christ. We deny that the worldly-minded can appeal from what God has done on

their behalf to a yet mightier interference which imagination can picture. It is the property of redemption, if not of creation, that it leaves no room for imagination. Those who turn with indifference from the proffers of the Gospel are just in the position of the atheist who should remain such after God had set before him the highest possible demonstration of Himself. It is not, we think, too bold a thing to say that, in redeeming us, God exhausted Himself — *He gave Himself.* And may we not argue that, resisting what has been granted, you demonstrate that you cannot be overcome, and thus your condemnation is sealed by the incontrovertible truth involved in the question of the text?

Looked at more in detail, the argument is—**I. As much has been done as could have been done, because of the Agency through which man's redemption was effected.** In looking at the cross, considering our sins as laid on the Being who hangs there in weakness and ignominy, the overcoming thought is, that this Being is none other than the Everlasting God, and that however He seem mastered by the powers of wickedness, He could by a single word, uttered from the altar on which He immolates Himself, scatter the universe into nothing, and call up an assemblage of new worlds and new creatures.—*What a condemning force this throws into the question of the text!* If it give an unmeasured stupendousness to the work of our redemption, that He who undertook, carried on, and completed that work was "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person," then surely what has been done for the "vineyard" proclaims us ruined if we bring not forth such fruits as God requires at our hands.—*If the extent of what has been done may be given in evidence that if it prove ineffectual there remains nothing more to be tried, what say you to the justice of the question? what to the condemnation under which it leaves the worldly-minded and rebellious?*

II. As much has been done as could have been done, regard being had to the completeness and fulness of the work, as well as to the greatness of its Author. We might have been sure beforehand that what the Divine Agent undertook would be thoroughly effected. The sins of the whole race were laid on Christ. There is consequently nothing in our own guiltiness to make us hesitate as to the possibility of *forgiveness.* The penalties of a violated law have been actually discharged.

The scheme of redemption provides also for our *acceptance*, so that happiness may be obtained. If it met our necessities only in part, there might be excuse for refusing it our attention. When you add to the unsearchable riches of grace in Christ *the continued and earnest agency of the Holy Spirit*, have you a word to plead against the remonstrance of God in the text?

III. We are bound to regard the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the grand revelation of future punishment and reward. Until the Redeemer appeared and brought more direct tidings from the invisible world, the sanctions of eternity were scarcely, if at all, brought to bear on the occupations of time. So imperfect had been the foregoing knowledge regarding the immortality of the soul that Paul declared of Christ that He "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." Much of what has been done for the "vineyard" consists in the greatness of the reward which the Gospel promises to righteousness, and the greatness of the punishment which it denounces on impenitence.

It was not redemption from mere temporary evil that Christ effected. Redemption does not make men immortal, but, finding them so, it sheds its influence throughout their unlimited existence, wringing the curse from its every instant, and leaving a blessing in its stead. The Gospel sets before us an array of motives, concerning which it is no boldness to say, that, if ineffectual, it is because we are immovable; if heaven fails

to attract, hell to alarm—the heaven and the hell opened to us by the revelation of Scripture—it can only be because of a set determination to continue in sin. *What more could have been done for the vineyard?* If you are waiting to be forced, you are waiting to be ruined. "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near."—*Henry Melvill, B.D.: Golden Lectures*, pp. 485–492.

MORAL PERVERSITY.

v. 20. *Woe unto them that call evil good, &c.*

If the judgments of men are habitually influenced by their affections, it is not surprising that their speech should bear the impress of the same controlling power. What we hear men say in the way of passing judgment upon things and persons, unless said deliberately for the purpose of deception, will afford us, for the most part, a correct idea of their dispositions and prevailing inclinations. There is, indeed, a customary mode of talking in which familiar formulas of praise and censure as to moral objects are employed as if by rote; but this dialect, however near it may approach to that of evangelical morality, is still distinguished from it by indubitable marks. One who thus indulges in the use of such expressions as imply a recognition of the principles of Biblical morality, but whose conduct repudiates them, in expressing his opinions on moral subjects avoids, as if instinctively, the terms of censure and of approbation which belong to Scripture. He will speak of an act or a course of acts as wrong, perhaps as vicious,—it may even be as wicked, but not as *sinful*. There are crimes and vices, but no sins in his vocabulary. Vice and sin are referable, it would seem, to an abstract and perhaps variable standard, while sin brings into view the legislative and judicial character of God. Two men shall converse together upon truth and falsehood, employing the *same* words and phrases; and yet when you come to ascertain the sense in which they severally use the same language, you shall find that while the one adopts the rigorous and simple rule of truth and falsehood laid down in the Bible and by common sense, the other holds it with so many qualifications and exceptions as almost to render it a rule more honoured in the breach than the observance. But who does not know that men are often worse in the bent of their affections than in the general drift of their discourse? If we err, therefore, in the application of the test proposed, we are far more apt to err in favour of the subject than against him. He who is invariably prompted, when there is no counteracting influence, to call evil good and good evil, is one who, like the fallen angel, says in his heart, "Evil, be thou my good!" and is, therefore, a just subject of the woe denounced by the prophet in the text.

I. The expression is descriptive of those who hate good and love evil—not of those who err as to what is good and what is evil. A rational nature is incapable of loving evil, simply viewed as evil, or of hating good when simply viewed as good. Whatever thing you love, you thereby recognise as good; and what you hate or abhor, you thereby recognise as evil. No man can dislike a taste, or smell, or sound which at the same time he regards as pleasant, nor can he like one which he thinks unpleasant. But change the standard of comparison, and what appeared impossible is realised. The music which is sweetest to your ear may be offensive when it breaks the slumber of your sleeping friend; the harshest voice may charm you when it announces that your friend still lives. The darling sin is hated by the sinner as the means of his damnation, though he loves it as the source of present

pleasure. When, therefore, men profess to look upon that as excellent which in their hearts and lives they treat as hateful, and to regard as evil and abominable that which they are seeking after and which they delight in, they are not expressing their own feelings, but assenting to the judgment of others. And if they are really so far enlightened as to think sincerely that the objects of their passionate attachment are evil, this is only admitting that their own affections are disordered and at variance with reason. It is as if a man's sense of taste should be so vitiated through disease, that what is sweet to others is to him a pungent bitter. So the sinner may believe, on God's authority or man's, that sin is evil and holiness is good, but his diseased eye will still confound light with darkness, and his lips, whenever they express the feelings of his heart, will continue to call good evil and evil good.

The three forms of expression in the text appear to be significant of one and the same thing. The thought is clothed first in literal and then in metaphorical expressions. The character thus drawn is generally applicable to ungodly men. If the verse be taken merely in this general sense, the woe which it pronounces is a general woe, or declaration of Divine displeasure and denunciation of impending wrath against the wicked generally, simply equivalent to that in chap. iii. 11.

Such a declaration, awful as it is, would furnish no specific test of character, because it would still leave the question undecided who it is that chooses evil and rejects good. But the prophet is very far from meaning merely to assert the general liability of sinners to the wrath of God. In view of the context, then, consider—

II. An enumeration of particular offences then especially prevailing. The text is the fourth in a series of six woes denounced upon as many outward manifestations of corrupt affection then especially prevalent, but by no means limited to that age or country; and these are set forth, not as the product of so many evil principles, but as the varied exhibition of that universal and profound corruption which he had just asserted to exist in general terms. 1. *The avaricious and ambitious grasping after great possessions, not merely as a means of luxurious indulgence, but as a distinction and a gratification of pride* (ver. 8). To such the prophet threatened woe (ver. 9), and to such the Apostle James also (James v. 4). 2. *Drunkenness* (ver. 11). Here also the description of the vice is followed by its punishment, including not only personal but national calamities, as war, desolation, and captivity. 3. *Presumption and blasphemy* (vers. 18, 19). 4. *Moral perversity*, as set forth in the text. 5. *Overweening confidence in human reason as opposed to God's unerring revelation* (ver. 21). 6. *Drunkenness, considered*, not, as in the former case, as a personal excess, producing inconsideration and neglect of God, but *as a vice of magistrates and rulers, and as leading to oppression and all practical injustice* (vers. 22, 23).

This view of the context is given for two reasons—1. To show that in this whole passage the prophet refers to species of iniquity familiar to our own time and country; and, 2. Chiefly to show that we have in the text the description of a certain outward form in which the prevailing wickedness betrayed itself. An outward mark of those who hate God and whom He designs to punish is their confounding moral distinctions in their conversation. Consider, then—

III. How moral distinctions are confounded. When one admits in words the great first principles in morals, yet takes away so much as to obliterate the practical distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, religion and irreligion, he does virtually, actually, call evil good and good evil. When one admits generally the turpitude of fraud, impurity, intemperance, malignity, &c., and yet in insulated cases treats these as peccadilloes, inadvertences, &c., he cannot be protected by the mere

assertion of a few general principles from the fatal charge of calling evil good. And as the counterpart of this, he who praises and admires all goodness in the abstract, but detests it when realised in concrete excellence, really and practically calls good evil. And he who, in relation to the self-same acts performed by different men, has a judgment suited to the case of each, all compassion to the wilful transgressions of the wicked, and all inexorable sternness to the infirmities of godly men, to all intents and purposes incurs the woe pronounced on those who call evil good and good evil. These distinctions may at present appear arbitrary, frivolous, or false, and, as a necessary consequence, the guilt of confounding them may almost fade to nothing,—to a stain so faint upon the conscience as to need no blood of expiation to remove it. But the day is coming when the eye of reason shall no longer find it possible to look at light and darkness as the same, and the woe already heard shall then be seen and felt. From the darkness and bitterness of that damnation may we all find deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord!—*J. Addison Alexander, D.D.: The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, pp. 568–578.

The Service of the Seraphim.

vi. 1, 2, 5–7. *I saw also the Lord, &c.*

In that perfect prayer which our Lord bequeathed to His disciples we are taught to ask that God's will may be done in earth as it is done in heaven. Thus angelic service is set before us as a model and pattern. Not that the services we are called upon to render are the same with those assigned to angels. Their sphere is heaven, ours for the present is the earth; and each of these spheres has its distinct and peculiar duties, appropriate to the nature and faculties of its occupants. But the spirit in which the employments of angels and men should be prosecuted is the same. One common sentiment—the sentiment of adoration and devotedness—should animate and govern them all. Hence the passage before us, although containing a record of the transactions of another sphere, contains a lesson, if not respecting the nature of our duties, yet respecting the method in which we should seek to fulfil them.

I. The twofold life of a servant of God, whether human or angelic, is here very beautifully exhibited to us. The seraphim are represented as veiling their faces and feet with their wings while they stand in adoration before the throne of God. But although engaged in ceaselessly adoring the Divine perfections, they do not lead a life of barren contemplation. The words, "with twain he did fly," intimate to us that they are also engaged in the active execution of those errands with which God has charged them. The Christian's life, like that of the seraphim, branches out into the two great divisions of contemplative devotion and active exertion. It is the life of Mary *combined* with that of Martha (P. D. 2417).

1. *The devotional branch of the Christian's life.* In the exercises of the closet and of the sanctuary are to be found the springs of the Christian's exertions in his Master's cause. These exercises are not originating sources of grace, but they are channels and vehicles through which God's Spirit conveys Himself to the soul—pitchers in which may be drawn up the waters of the River of Life to refresh and recruit the energies of him whom a painful resistance to evil within and without has rendered weary and faint in his mind (H. E. I. 3426, 4107, 4108, and 3438–3448). If devotion be essential to the perfection of a seraph's service, how much more essential must it be to ours, our necessities being so immensely greater than those of the bright inhabitants of heaven!

The exigencies of our time make devotion especially needful now. The present is emphatically a period of the world's history in which "many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased." Moreover, there is a revival of outward energy and activity in the cause of religion. This is a blessing. But remember, days of excitement are not days of deep devotion. There may be much of rapid movement abroad in the world without a corresponding adoration of God in the secret chamber of the heart—much of flying without veiling of the face (α.)

2. *The outward manifestation of the Christian life* discernible by the world. Care must be taken not only that the lamp shall be filled with oil, but that there shall be a light shining before men (Matt v. 16; H. E. I. 1042, 1044, 3906). The seraphim are not so wrapt up in adoration of God that they are forgetful of active service. "With twain they did fly" for the execution of the errands on which they were commissioned.

Here is a reproof of the monastic principle, that seclusion from the society of our fellow-men and from the active duties of life is necessary in order to secure an uninterrupted period of leisure for solitary spiritual exercises. Undue predominance is thus given to one branch of God's service, to the prejudice and neglect of the other and no less important branch. Exercise as well as nourishment and repose is essential to the health of the body, and so toil in the vineyard—earnest endeavour to advance the kingdom of God in our own hearts and the hearts of others—is no less essential to the health of the soul. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;" but for what purpose? That they may walk in good works, and run with patience the race that is set before them (chap. xl. 31; H. E. I. 1736–1742).

II. Some practical lessons concerning the maintenance and manifestation of the twofold Christian life.

1. *A lesson as to the spirit which should pervade all devotion.* These bright and glorious beings are without sin. Still, such is their sense of the infinite distance between themselves and their Creator, that they veil their faces and their feet before His throne in token of adoring reverence. The first and most essential element of devotion is a feeling of deep awe flowing from a sense of God's transcendent excellences and leading to profound self-abasement (H. E. I. 3798, 3799, 5074). If reverence was befitting in the seraphim, how much more is it necessary in sinful men! (Luke xviii. 13; Ezra ix. 6).

The vision of God wrought in Isaiah a feeling almost akin to despair. It seemed to him as if the perfect holiness of God was engaged to banish for ever every creature possessing the slightest taint of moral evil (ver. 5). In vers. 6, 7 we have the glorious remedy. What is the significance of the symbols? By the work of the Son of God a mighty Altar of Propitiation has been reared up, and thence there comes to the penitent sinner cleansing as well as pardon. The "live coal" is an emblem of that love and zeal in God's service with which the Holy Spirit imbues the souls of those who flee to the Altar of Atonement as their only refuge from the wrath to come. A participation in that Spirit's influence is absolutely essential to our true participation in the chorus of the angelic host (H. E. I. 2887).

2. *A few words on that active service which is the outward manifestation of the principles nourished by devotion.* (1.) We must prepare for it by the care and culture of our own heart (β.) (2.) There is also an outward work which God has made binding on all of us. He has assigned to each of us a certain position in life. Every such position involves its peculiar responsibilities, snares, and occupations. The responsibilities must be cheerfully and manfully met, the occupations diligently fulfilled, as a piece of taskwork allotted to us by the Lord of the vineyard (Eph. vi. 7). Besides, God has

intrusted to us, in various measures, substance, time, abilities, influence, and these we are diligently to use for the promotion of the cause of God in the world. In our busy path through life, which brings us in contact with so many individuals, opportunities are ever and anon presented to us of being useful to our fellow-men; and to watch for, seize, and improve such opportunities is not the least important of these branches of active service (P. D. 40, 3567, 3569).

CONCLUSION.—1. It is not the intrinsic dignity of our duties, nor the large result of our fulfilment of them, which renders the diligent performance of them an acceptable work in God's eyes. The great design of our being placed in this world is not that we may do some signal service, or large amount of service, to our Creator, but rather that we may execute the service (be it great or small) allotted to us in a spirit of fidelity, zeal, and love. The spirit which is thrown into and pervades the work is everything—the work itself (comparatively) nothing. Be the sphere what it may which Divine Providence has assigned us, let the duties of it be executed in a seraphic spirit (P. D. 1484). 2. We have overwhelming motives, if we did but rightly appreciate them, to devotedness of our every faculty to the service of our God. The redeemed sinner owes to God far more of allegiance than the angel who has retained his integrity. Angels no such Fall have known, "angels no such Love have known," as we.—*E. M. Goulburn, D.C.L.: Sermons*, pp. 77–99.

(α.) If this be the case with any of us, if, with the busy occupation of the hands in the furtherance of religious objects, we have allowed the inward life of communion with God to decline, how painfully do we resemble those virgins who took no heed to provide for their dying lamps a continual supply of oil! The profession which we have made before men, however bright its blaze, will one day be shown to have been delusive—to have been destitute of those animating principles of faith and love from which alone can flow an acceptable service.—*Goulburn.*

(β.) God requires us to set a strict watch over its outgoings—a watch such as sentinels keep over the persons and goods which pass out of a city whose allegiance to the sovereign is suspected—to curb and quell at its earliest outbreak every rising of vanity, temper, bitterness, passion, and lust—to drag forth from its dark recesses and to slay every cherished iniquity which has found there a harbour and a hiding-place. Our own heart is a vineyard over which God hath set every one of us to dress it and to keep it. We are to extirpate the soil's poisonous produce, and to implore upon the soil of this vineyard the precious dews of the Divine Spirit, which may remedy its native barrenness and turn it from a desert into the garden of the Lord.—*Goulburn.* See also H. E. L. 1841, 1 42, 2695–2708.

THE MORAL HISTORY OF A RISING SOUL.

vi. 5–8. *Then said I, Woe is me, &c.*

Whilst holiness is the normal, depravity is the actual state of man. A restoration to that spiritual condition is his profoundest necessity, his want of wants. The recovery of holiness involves the recovery of all other good. There seem to be, in the nature of the case, *five stages through which the soul must pass in this all-important and glorious transit.*

I. A VISION OF THE GREAT RULER AS THE HOLIEST OF BEINGS. Isaiah had this: "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Three facts will show that a spiritual vision of God is the first step of the soul towards holiness. 1. *There can be no excitement of the moral sensibilities and powers without a vision of God.* Show me a soul that has never had an inner vision of God, and you show me a soul whose conscience, whose moral powers, are entirely dormant. The passions, the intellect, the imagination may move, but the conscience, the heart, the moral essence, the *self* of the man, moves not—is dead. 2. *The means which God has ever employed to restore men are visions of Himself.* What is the Bible but a record of Divine visions and manifestations to man? What is the Gospel—"God's power unto

salvation"—but the manifestation of the Eternal in Christ? Here He appears to man in the "face of Jesus Christ." 3. *The history of all restored souls shows that the improvement commences at this stage.* The explanation which Paul gives of the first upward movement would generally be true of all: "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me," &c. What the sun is to the plant, God is to the soul.

II. A PROFOUND CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR FALLEN STATE. "Then said I, Woe is me," &c. His consciousness included four things—1. *A deep sense of his personality.* "*I* am undone." He feels himself singled out from the millions. When conscience is touched, she breaks the bond, individualises the man, and makes him feel as if he stood alone before the Eternal Judge. 2. *A sense of personal ruin.* "Woe is me, for I am undone." My prospects are blighted, my hopes are gone. 3. *A sense of personal ruin arising from a sense of personal sin.* I feel my ruin because I feel my sin. "I am a man of unclean lips;" I am a sinner, and therefore "undone." 4. *A sense of personal sin, heightened by the remembrance of his neighbour's sins.* "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." So long as conscience is torpid, men often make the sinful conduct of others an apology for their own; but when conscience awakes, such sophistries depart.

III. A REMOVAL OF THE CRUSHING SENSE OF GUILT. "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand," &c. Three thoughts are suggested by this—1. *There are Divine means for the removal of sin.* This "live coal," this altar, and seraphim in the vision, symbolise this truth. 2. *The means are something in connection with sacrifice.* Fire is a purifying element, and is regarded as the emblem of purity. This "live coal" was taken from the altar of burnt-offering. The fire of that altar was at first kindled by the Lord, and ever afterwards kept burning. What is the power that takes away sin? The Divine Word in connection with Christ's sacrifice—the doctrine of the Cross. This, like "fire," has a purifying power. 3. *The means are employed by a divinely-appointed ministry.* Let that seraph stand as the emblem of a true minister, and we see that his work is to take the purifying elements from the altar and apply them to men.

IV. AN EVER-OPEN AND SENSITIVE EAR TO THE VOICE OF GOD. "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying," &c. Three thoughts will develop the general and practical meaning of these words—1. *God has deep thoughts about our race.* The Bible reveals some of these thoughts, and so does Nature. 2. *Just as the soul is cleared of sin does it become conscious of these thoughts.* Let the conscience be thoroughly cleared of sin, and it will hear the voice of God in every sound and see His glory in every form. The universe to a holy being is the tongue of God (P. D. 2545, 2552, 2560, 2563, 2564). 3. *This consciousness of the Divine thoughts about our race is a necessary stage in the moral progress of the soul.* It is only thus we walk with God, as Enoch did of old.

V. A HEARTY READINESS TO DO WHAT THE SUPREME WILL COMMANDS. "Here am I; send me." I am ready to do whatever Thou commandest. Send me anywhere, at any time, to do any work; I am ready to catch the slightest whisper of duty; my soul stands with plumed pinions.—*David Thomas, D.D.: The Homilist*, vol. v. pp. 411–418.

SANCTUARY IN GOD.

viii. 14. *And He shall be for a sanctuary.*

Not a few mourn, in the midst of a busy, bustling age, a loss of sacredness in life. Not the false "sacred"—that which is merely ascetic separation from life and duty; nor that which is merely solemn "sacred"—the dull heavy monotony of gloominess.

We naturally say that if this is

God's world, if civil and civic duties, social responsibilities, are God-ordained, it is likely, at least, that *here* we may be able to secure a heavenly citizenship amid earthly cares and customs. This is exactly what God reveals in the text. Sanctuary, He says, is *not* in mere place; *not* in separation from manly duty: I open up my very *nature* to you. How often this idea recurs in the Scriptures! God is our refuge and rest, our hiding-place, our dwelling-place.

I. THE SACREDNESS THAT A REVERENT HEART DESIRES. Something within us asserts its dignity when society is frivolous and gay, and when the routine of life brings us into association with lives where the light even of conscience burns low, when the reverent *wonder* that filled even Pagan hearts has given place to scientific explanations of every spiritual function. When we are brought into contact with all this, then it is that we find how the high tides of the world cover the little green knolls of devotion, and sweep away alike the altar of prayer and the harp of praise. In all earnest natures there comes, at times, resentment at all this. We believe the divinity within us. We believe the high call of seer and prophet to nobler ends; we believe, above all, that Lord of life and light who tells us that the life is more than meat, and who fed His own life by the mountain prayer and the garden solitude. We should seek to secure the sacredness we feel we need, not in morbid methods, but in ways that are human, and ways that are Divine because they are human. Christ lived and worked amongst men. We, too, may secure sacredness for our lives; we may carry in our mien and breathe in our converse the springs of hope and faith and love which flow still from Zion's sacred hill.

II. THE SACREDNESS THAT MAKES SANCTUARY IN GOD HIMSELF. "*He* shall be for a sanctuary." He whom wicked men dread and flee from; for, as of old, darkness cannot dwell with light, nor irreverence with reverence, nor mammon-worship with devotion to God. We may carry very bad hearts into very beautiful places. Place is easily made unsacred, but into fellowship with God there can enter nothing that is false, or worldly, or vile. "Sanctuary in a person?" Yes; for even here, in this dim sphere of earthly friendship, our best sanctuaries, apart from Christ, have been men and women,—those who bear His likeness, and who do His will. "Sanctuaries?" Yes; for with them we are ashamed of unworthy motive, of impure thought, of unsacred aim. Take Christ with you, and every place is sacred. This is our living sanctuary; we abide in Him who says, "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." And if by His own Divine nature He is a sanctuary, He is also by *experience* too. How much the human sanctuary of friendship is beautified when there is *oneness of feeling* about the battle and burden of life! Is it nothing, then, that when we speak of sanctuary in Christ we should mean "sympathy," all that belongs to a brother born for adversity—to Him who, as a "Man of Sorrows," was "acquainted with grief" (lxiii. 9)? We know indeed but little of the realities of religion unless we have found such a living sanctuary in Christ Jesus the Lord (H. E. I. 968–975).

III. THE SACREDNESS OF ALL THE FUTURE DAYS. "He shall be." Names vary in interpreting what God is to suit need and experience. We translate the want, and then God's name is translated to meet it. I am hungry—He is Bread; thirsty—He is water, &c. The word "sanctuary" meets special wants. Life is not always a seeking for a refuge, but it is so especially at certain times and in strange and desolate experiences. We are alone in a strange city. The child must leave home to teach, to toil, to live; the weakness will come which presages decline and death; the soul does feel that some lights are lost to faith and that others are growing dim. He *shall be* for a sanctuary.

Let the hours come: He will come too. Who can make retreat into his own heart and find perfect sanctuary there? Christ alone could do *that*. We cannot. Nature cannot afford us the sanctuary we need; she has healthy anodynes of atmosphere that afford us deep and quiet retreats, but sanctuary, in the highest sense, she has not. Christ, and He alone, will be now and for ever a sanctuary (H. E. I. 2378–2387).

IV. THE SACREDNESS OF PERSONAL LIFE IN GOD. We can have no safety or rest in Churches as such. They are helpful; they are houses of fellowship and centres of usefulness. But we cannot say, as Mediævalism said, "Enter the Church and be saved." The soul's relation to God is personal and individual. Whether the relation of faith is real, vital, each soul can attest for itself; and that living relationship is all that can ever make life sacred to any man. When the life is hid with Christ in God, all is well, for all is sacred; and nothing that He has created us to do or to enjoy is common or unclean. So may God help us to keep a sacred life which finds sanctuary in the Saviour, until we find it where there is no temple, but where there is sanctuary in God (Rev. xxi. 22, 23).—*W. M. Statham: Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii. pp. 131–133.

WISE LESSONS FROM WICKED LIPS.

ix. 10. *The bricks are fallen down, &c.*

Jesus said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," meaning that they excel them in shrewdness and tact. Men of the world do not readily submit to defeat and failure, but strive to convert defeat into victory, and failure into success. In this respect, therefore, the children of this world are worthy of imitation. Within the spiritual, Christian sphere we might well emulate them in the determined, hopeful, persevering, progressive, patient spirit with which they prosecute their affairs. Of this the text affords illustration. The children of this world, of whom it speaks to us, are worthy of our imitation in the following respects:—

I. **They proceed with a defined purpose.** The bricks mentioned as having fallen down were not a heap of burned clay, which somehow had got piled up, no one could tell how. They had been built by human hands, and the builders had heads as well as hands. But now that the bricks had fallen, in making up their minds as to what should be done, they proceed with a defined purpose. The architect precedes the builder; the head leads the hand. They build not at random. They first say what they will build, and how. They also resolve once more to beautify their surroundings with trees, and they make their choice. This time they will not have sycamores, but cedars.

The same principle should underlie the building up of all Christian character and work. Knowledge and zeal should ever be in partnership. The hand should be under control of the head. Everything should be done well, because done wisely. One purpose should run through and be supreme in each life. Striving, and toiling, and fighting, we should have it first settled what we are to strive, and toil, and fight for. And as to this we are left in no difficulty. A plan is made for us, and our wisdom is to work it out. A number of young men were one day practising archery, when the arrows of one invariably stuck in the ground. Seeing this, one of his companions cried out, "Do aim higher." That is what we have to do. We substitute our own low, faltering purpose for the high, glorious purpose of God (Rom. viii. 29; 1 Pet. ii. 21). So, also, in connection with our work, a nigh purpose should be our aim. We should not make up our minds to

do as little as possible, neither should our only object be to do as much as possible. Our question should be, What is my Master's will? Obedience is better than sacrifice. They who would work for their Lord with acceptance must wait on Him, and He will give "to every man his work." Further, with our plan fixed, we must set our whole heart upon the working of it out. Here Israel teaches us. When her first effort failed, she tried again. The spirit of enthusiasm must inspire us. This it is which makes labour rest, and turns the yoke into a crown.

II. They were inspired with hopefulness. Their bricks fell down, but their spirits fell not into the pit of despair. Their sycamores were cut down, but their ambition was not. They viewed the desolation not without sadness, but in the midst of it all "*Nil Desperandum*" was the song which they sang. And that is the spirit of the world to-day. So the Christian ought to be hopeful. You have fallen! Say, "I will rise again." Your schemes have failed! Say, "I will try again." You are afraid you have laboured in vain! Say, "In labours I will be more abundant." You went into what you thought the paradise of God, but lo! it turned out to be a dreary wilderness. What then? Still hope in God. Seek on, O seeker, and thou shalt find. Knock on, louder and louder; the door will be opened.

Night must give way to day. Mystery after mystery will unfold itself. Light will appear to every man having eyes and using them. The children of this world hope; greater reason have they to hope who are children of God.

III. They show a spirit of industrious perseverance. Their hands responded to the impulse of their hearts. What they were ready to say they were ready to do. They were prepared by hard, persevering toil to make good their hope. These men of Israel were at this time without God, but they were not without common sense. They dreamed not that by mere wishing their ruined walls would rise again. If they wanted new temples and goodly cedars, they must build and plant them. The moral here is plain (Matt. vii. 21). Hoping will not do everything. It must be backed by earnest effort. The way to heaven is not reached by flying, but by toiling. I am a son of God; let me then subscribe myself "Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ." Beautiful city of God! we hope some day to reach thy gate of pearl and enter in, but till then—

> "Many a sorrow, many a labour,
> Many a tear."

To your hope add diligence. Watch and wait, but forget not to work.

IV. They improve matters. These tumble-down buildings were, after all, but brick; but now they would build, not with bricks, but with hewn stones. Around them had flourished sycamores, but now that these were cut down they would plant cedars. Such is the spirit of the world. To-day is to be an improvement upon yesterday. "*Excelsior*" is added to "*Nil Desperandum.*" Is not this the spirit which ought to animate us? There is no temper but may be improved. You never did a thing for Jesus, let it be ever so trifling, but you may do better next time you try. The text speaks to us of failure and ruin; and it shows us that out of these greater and better efforts arose. So should it be with us. Has your faith given way under the severe strain put upon it? Then for the future you must not only have faith, but stronger faith. In the pride and stoutness of their hearts Israel said, "In the future we will do better than we did before;" and we must say, not in the pride of our hearts, but in humble dependence upon God, strengthened with His might, "We count not ourselves to have attained, neither are we already perfect; but this one thing we do," &c. (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

CONCLUSION.—Looking at what Israel proposed to do, three words are

suggested, which would be good motto words for us to adopt. They are *strength, beauty, growth.* 1. "We will build with stones." They would now erect a strong building, one not easily to be overthrown. This should be our first concern. We are building not for time, but for eternity. What is to last must be strong. 2. They said, moreover, "We will build with hewn stones;" we shall go in for beauty as well as for strength. Some of us are strong, but we are lacking in beauty. We are robust characters, but we are also rough. There is a more excellent way. Perfection of character is reached only in so far as strength and beauty are blended together. 3. There must also be growth. Israel resolved to plant cedars, trees which should live and grow on for centuries. So we, rooted and grounded in faith, and love, and hope, should grow up in strength and beauty. So, on and on —changing bricks for hewn stones, and sycamores for cedars.—*Adam Scott: Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii. pp. 230–232.

The Diffusion of the Knowledge of God.

(*For Whit-Sunday.*)

xi. 9. ***The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.***

It was promised that "the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh;" and yet a flood there was to be, all-compassing, all-absorbing, in God's good time and in His merciful foreknowledge when He spake the former word; but not to destroy all flesh, but to save it; and in its season the rain of grace descended (xlv. 8; Matt. vii. 25; Ps. xcviii. 8).

How different a fulfilment was this from that for which the apostles had been waiting! No doubt they imagined that such as Christ had been would be the Paraclete who was to come—One whose individuality and intelligence they could not doubt, and need not take on faith. When they were waiting for this Angelic Messenger, Prophet, and Lawgiver, One higher than all created strength and wisdom suddenly came down upon them; yet not as a Lord and Governor, but as an agency or power (Acts ii. 2–4).

Such was the coming of the Comforter, He who is infinitely personal, who is the One God, absolutely, fully, perfectly, simply; He it was who vouchsafed to descend upon the apostles, and that as if not a Person, but as an influence or quality, by His attribute of ubiquity diffusing Himself over their hearts, filling all the house, poured over the world, as wholly here as if He were not there, and hence vouchsafing to be compared to the inanimate and natural creation, to water and wind, which are of so subtle a nature, of so penetrating a virtue, and of so extended a range. And most exactly have these figures, which He condescended to apply to Himself, been fulfilled—

I. In the course of the dispensation of the Spirit. His operation has been calm, equable, gradual, far-spreading, overtaking, intimate, irresistible. What is so awfully silent, so mighty, so inevitable, so encompassing as a flood of water? Fire alarms from the first: we see it and we scent it; there is crashing and downfall, smoke and flame; it makes an inroad here and there; it is uncertain and wayward;—but a flood is the reverse of all this. It gives no tokens of its coming; it lets men sleep through the night, and they wake and find themselves hopelessly besieged; prompt, secret, successful, and equable, it preserves one level; it is everywhere; there is no refuge. And it makes its way to the foundations; towers and palaces rear themselves as usual; they

have lost nothing of their perfection, and give no sign of danger, till at length suddenly they totter and fall. And here and there it is the same, as if by some secret understanding; for by one and the same agency the mighty movement goes on here and there and everywhere, and all things seem to act in concert with it, and to conspire together for their own ruin. And in the end they are utterly removed, and perish from off the face of the earth. Fire, which threatens more fiercely, leaves behind it relics and monuments of its agency; but water buries as well as destroys; it wipes off the memorial of its victims from the earth.

Such was the power of the Spirit in the beginning, when He vouchsafed to descend as an invisible wind, as an outpoured flood. Thus He changed the whole face of the world. For a while men went on as usual, and dreamed not what was coming: and when they were roused from their fast sleep, the work was done; it was too late for aught else but impotent anger and a hopeless struggle. The kingdom was taken away from them and given to another people. The ark of God moved upon the face of the waters. It was borne aloft by the power, greater than human, which had overspread the earth, and it triumphed, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

II. IN EVERY HUMAN HEART TO WHICH HE COMES. By attending to the figure we shall understand (what concerns us most intimately) whether we are personally under His influence, or are deceiving ourselves. (1.) *Any spirit which professes to come to us alone and not to others, which makes no claim of having moved the body of the Church at all times and places, is not of God, but a private spirit of error* (Ps. lxv. 10–12). (2.) *Vehemence, tumult, confusion, are no attributes of that benignant flood with which God has replenished the earth.* That flood of grace is sedate, majestic, gentle in its operations. If at any time it seems to be violent, that violence is occasioned by some accident or imperfection of the earthen vessels into which it vouchsafed to pour itself, and is no token of the coming of Divine Power. Ecstasies and transports often proceed from false spirits, who are but imitating heavenly influences as best they may, and seducing souls to their ruin. (3.) *The Divine baptism wherewith God visits us penetrates through the whole soul and body.* It leaves no part of us uncleansed, unsanctified. It claims the whole man for God. It is everywhere, in every faculty, every affection, every design, every work (2 Cor. x. 5). Thus—

III. THE HEART OF EVERY CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO REPRESENT IN MINIATURE THE WHOLE CHURCH. One Spirit makes the whole Church and every member of it to be His temple. As He gives peace to the multitude of nations, who are naturally in discord one with another, so does He give an orderly government to the soul, and set reason and conscience as sovereigns over the inferior parts of our nature. As He leavens each rank and pursuit of the community with the principles of the doctrine of Christ, so does that same Divine leaven spread through every thought of the mind, every member of the body, till the whole is sanctified. And let us be quite sure that these two operations of the Spirit depend upon each other. We cannot hope for peace at home while we are at war abroad. We cannot hope for unity of the faith if we at our own private will make a faith for ourselves. Break unity in one point, and the fault runs through the whole body. The flood of God's grace keeps its level, and if it is low in one place it is low in another.

CONCLUSION.—As we would forward that blessed time when the knowledge of the Lord will in its fulness cover the earth, as the waters cover their bed, let us look at home, and wait on God for the cleansing and purifying of ourselves. Till we look at home, no good shall we be able to perform for the Church at large; we shall but do mischief when we intend

to do good, and to us will apply that proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." And let us not doubt that if we do thus proceed we shall advance the cause of Christ in the world. Let us but raise the level of religion in our hearts, and it will rise in the world. And, meantime, we shall have our true reward, which is personal, consisting in no mere external privileges, however great, but in the "water of life," of which we are allowed to take freely (Ps. xxxvi. 7–9, i. 3; Isa. xxxii. 18; Ps. xxiii. 27). — *John Henry Newman: Subjects of the Day*, pp. 126–136.

The Proud City Doomed.

xiii. 1. *The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.*

In 2 Kings xvii. we find an account of the invasion of Israel by the Assyrians (vers. 1–6). Then follows a long enumeration of the sins which had brought this Divine visitation upon the ten tribes, ending with the words, "So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day" (ver. 23). If the scourge was no longer in the hands of the king of Assyria, it would be transferred to other hands not less terrible.

1. Would this scourge destroy the life of the Jewish nation? This was the awful question which presented itself to the minds of the prophets when they saw one and another limb of this nation lopped off, when they saw that a great numerical majority of the tribes would be carried away. Isaiah's eyes were opened to see whence the permanence of the race was derived, how great critical moments of its life discovered Him who was everlastingly present with it. The child born in hours of trouble and rebuke had borne witness to him of the continuance of the regal family as well as of the people of God's covenant, when the rage of their enemies as well as their own faithlessness were threatening them with destruction. Nor was this all. In the miserable, heartless reign of Ahaz the vision had been presented to him of a "Rod coming out of the stem of Jesse, which should stand for an ensign of the people. To it should the Gentiles seek, and His rest should be glorious." Consider *the Rod out of Jesse, what it betokened* (Isa. xi. 10–12)! The immediate fruits which Isaiah saw coming out of this root might have appeared in the days of any patriotic and prosperous prince, and did actually appear in the latter days of Hezekiah. No doubt Hezekiah might become, and did actually become, "an ensign to the nations," just as Solomon had been before him, one to whom they brought presents, whose alliance they sought, whose elevation out of a deep calamity was a proof that some mighty God was with him. But—

2. Though we need not seek in any more distant days than those of Hezekiah for a very satisfactory fulfilment of these predictions (and let it never be forgotten that what may seem to us, when we look back over 3000 years, an exaggerated description of deliverance and restoration, must have seemed inadequate and almost cold to those who experienced the blessing),—though Hezekiah was a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and though the Spirit of the Lord did rest upon him (xi. 2), —though the peacefulness and order of his last years might faithfully carry out the symbols of the wolf and the lamb lying down togther, yet it was no less impossible for the prophet to think chiefly of Hezekiah when he was uttering these words than it would have been for him to fancy that he was the King whom he saw sitting on the throne, and his train filling the temple in the year that Uzziah died (chap. vi. 1–4). There was, however, this great blessing which came to Isaiah from his being able to connect the Divine King with an actual man—the belief that a man must embody and present the

Godhead, that only in a man could its blessedness and glory appear, acquired a force and vividness from his hope of Hezekiah's government and from his actual experience of it, which we may say, without rashness or profaneness, would have been otherwise wanting in him. In using that language, we are only affirming that any method but the one which we know the Divine Wisdom has adopted for conveying a truth to a man's spirit must be an imperfect method. Hezekiah's existence was necessary to the instruction of Isaiah, and through him of all generations to come. Perhaps Shalmaneser and Sennacherib were, in another way, scarcely less necessary.

Apparently the prophet passes in this chapter to an entirely new subject. The Assyrian seems to be forgotten. He opens with the burden of Babylon; he goes on to the burden of Damascus, &c. But Babel or Babylon represented to the prophets the attempt to establish a universal society, not upon the acknowledgment of the Divine care and protection, but upon the acknowledgment of a mere power in nature against which men must try to measure their own. The order and history of the Jewish nation were made, from age to age, silently to testify against it. "Babylon is the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency" (ver. 19); her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged (ver. 22). But these and similar words must refer to more than the destruction of a certain Chaldean city then or afterwards. How can we limit them to it when we find such words as those in vers. 11–13? Instead of being, as some suppose, an interpolated fragment, the burden of Babylon comes in to make all the visitations upon the other tribes of the earth intelligible. They are diverse but harmonious portions of the same Divine message to man—a message of terror, but also of deliverance and hope. In chap. xiv. we feel how wonderfully these are combined.

But though most feel something of the grandeur of this poetry, and a few the truth of this prophecy, we do not enough consider upon what both are founded. The God-Man was the ground upon which the Jewish nation stood; here you have the contrast—the Man-God; he would ascend up to heaven and exalt his throne above the stars of God. This is the natural ruler of a society which counts the gold of Ophir more precious than human beings. We have here the Babylonian power and the Jerusalem power, that parody of human and Divine greatness which is seen in an earthly tyrant, that perfect reconciliation of divinity and humanity which is seen in the Redeemer. Consider both images well. Both are presented to us; we must admire and copy one of them; and whichever we take, we must resolutely discard the other. If we have ever mixed them together in our minds, a time is at hand that will separate them for ever. The Babylonian mark and image, your own evil nature, a corrupt society, the evil spirit, have been striving to stamp you ever since your childhood. Each hour you are tempted to think a man less precious than the gold of Ophir; the current maxims of the world take for granted that he is; you in a thousand ways are acting on those maxims. Oh, remember that in them, and in the habits which they beget, lies the certain presage of slavery for men and nations, the foretaste of decay and ruin, which no human contrivances can avert, which the gifts and blessings of God's providence only accelerate. May God grant us power to cast Babylonian principles out of our hearts, that when they come before us we may despise them and laugh them to scorn, knowing that not against us but against the Holy One the enemy is exalting himself. In that day may we be able to sing the song which the prophet said should be sung in the land of Judah (xxvi. 1–4).—*F. D. Maurice, M.A.: Prophets and Kings*, pp. 272–290.

True National Greatness.

xix. 1–3, 14. *The burden of Egypt, &c.*

The prophecies of Isaiah take a wide range, embrace the fortunes of almost every nation, however remote, with whom the Israelites were brought into common relation, whether of policy or commerce—Moab, Damascus, Tyre, Babylon, Ethiopia, Egypt. The prophet records the political and social phenomena of his day, not with the eye of a mere statesman or diplomatist, but as reviewing the moral as well as the political aspects of things, the eternal governing laws as well as the fitful moods and changes of a nation's life, the spiritual as well as the material forces of the world.

Israel, in their dread of the great Assyrian monarchy, often cast wistful eyes towards Egypt, where they hoped to find a sure and powerful ally. The Egyptians accepted their subsidies, but thought they consulted their own interests best by observing what has been called amongst ourselves a "masterly inactivity." Their strength was to sit still. They had a large standing army; but, as Rabshakeh showed, on a memorable occasion, that he knew (chap. xxxvi. 6) the nation, with all its outward semblance of prosperity, was being eaten up with a thousand moral and social cankers, which corrupted the very source of all national life. This chapter lays bare those wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

1. *There was a day when Egypt had been famous for its wisdom.* This wisdom had become a thing of the past (vers. 11, 12).

2. *There was no unity of purpose, no coherence of action in the body politic.* The true ideas of the family, of the municipality, of the nation, were lost. Every man was fighting against his brother (ver. 2). It is history eternally repeating itself; it is the lament of Thucydides over Greece; of Horace, Livy, and Tacitus over the corruption of guilty imperialism, and over the absence of the masculine, simple, republican virtues of ancient Rome.

3. *With the decay of public virtue comes the decay of public spirit, and then soon follows the decay of national strength.* Then comes what these old Hebrew seers called the "judgment;" God coming out of His place to visit the earth; anarchy, internal dissolution, collapse, conquest by the foreigner; the giving over of the nation into the hand of a cruel lord; the establishment of a military despotism.

It were easy to point these remarks elsewhere, but let us look at home. Many feel that during the last decade of years or more England has been parting with many of her old traditions. Some of those principles which were merely corrupt remnants of a social and political system which has passed away—feudalism—we have undoubtedly gained by losing. *But there are others which we have lost, or are fast losing, to the great detriment of the commonwealth.* The high sense of duty to the State overruling the sense of interest in the individual citizen; the true measure of a nation's wealth and greatness, not by its revenue in pounds sterling, but by its revenue in the healthy bodies, and honest hearts, and pure, healthy homes of the people; the noble, self-sacrificing spirit of devotion to the call of duty; the principle of right recognised as a higher principle than that of expediency; a temper of loyalty in the strict sense of the word, of willing obedience to the law and those who represent the law; strict commercial integrity, and not the tricks of trade which have been generated by an unwholesome competition—these are maxims of ancient wisdom which made England great, and the loss of which will make England small. Our greatness, whatever it has been, has not rested so much upon material forces, but, like Israel's of old, upon moral. We can only hope that our

position among the peoples will be maintained as long as we hold fast the principles by which it was won. These privileges are not things of chance, but the direct result of moral laws as immutable and irreversible as the laws which govern the physical world. God send us statesmen who will turn the nation's mind away from delusive and partisan aims, and direct them seriously to efforts which may unite us all in one great crusade against evil; in which every soldier might certainly feel that he was fighting under the banner of Christ, in a righteous war, for objects which surely have a place in the redemption which Christ accomplished for the world.—*Bishop Fraser: Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii. pp. 177, 178.

A Momentous Inquiry.

xxi. 11. *Watchman, what of the night?*

Some calamity or sad moral condition is foreseen by the prophet. Moral evil is fitly compared to darkness. The term "night" is used to express error and sin. This was a time of darkness. The burden of Dumah was: "Watchman, what of the night?" What is the prospect? Are there any signs of coming day?

The world in its moral history had been for the most part in darkness. It commenced with a bright and sinless morning; but this was succeeded by a time of dark clouds and desolating storms. After the Deluge the world started anew from another head. The new world, however, differed but little from the old. Then God called Abraham, and made his seed His chosen people, through whom He might accomplish His beneficent designs. Outside of Judea there was not much to dispel the darkness. Greece furnished a Socrates and a Plato; but because of her vices and crimes Greece soon went down to ruin. The once magnificent empires Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome were alike involved in the moral night of error and sin. We may inquire, as the voice out of Seir did, "Watchman, what of the night?" What prospect is there for this sin-darkened world? And we may respond in the words of the prophet: "The morning cometh." The morning cometh; but also the night—a night whose duration we may not be able to tell.

I. **How will this inquiry apply to Isaiah's time?** It was indeed for the chosen people a time of darkness. But the day is about to break! The breathings of better things come like the morning air. "The morning cometh," but also the night—the morning to the sad-hearted Jews, but the night to others—to the Idumeans, who had long cherished unfriendly feelings to the Jews, and appear to have rejoiced in their sorrow. The voice from Dumah was probably a sneering taunt, "Where is now your God in whom ye trusted?"

Isaiah had a grander vision and saw another morning. The long night of the olden dispensation still lingered, but the prophet saw the breaking day, and told of the advent of One who was to be the light and glory of the world (ix. 6, 7, lx. 2, 3, 20). The vision which Isaiah saw we also are permitted to see. To him it was the Saviour to come, to teach, to suffer, to scatter the darkness; to us it is the Saviour who *has* come, and taught, and suffered, and died, and rose again, and whose glorious light has not only gilded the mountain-tops, but is spreading over all the whole land. And there are signs which will not fail that his grandest visions will be realised.

II. **How will this inquiry apply to our own times?** 1. What mysteries has science unveiled! How great the historical and geographical research of our day! How successful our time has been in bringing unity out of the variety of the universe and harmony out of its apparent discord! 2. Ours

has been a time of moral progress. Slavery has been abolished from our realm. A great work has been done for the arrest of intemperance. The cause of missions has grown into large proportions. 3. The religious progress of the world is remarkable. Religious liberty is rapidly spreading. There is encouraging advance in the social or loving element. In the Church the working element is growing. Never has the giving element assumed such proportions. Amid this varied growth there is a strong tendency towards Christian unity. The enemy is vigilant; it is yet the night of battle, of temptation, and of peril, but the morning surely cometh.

III. **How will this inquiry apply to ourselves personally?** 1. *There is a night of scepticism*, or partial scepticism, in which some are involved. There are two classes of sceptics: some are sceptics because they want to be so; some are honest doubters, as Thomas the disciple was—constitutionally a doubter, but honest withal. And therefore he did not turn away from the light, and "My Lord and my God!" exclaimed the enlightened, convinced, and believing Thomas. To the earnest and sincere inquirer the response must be, "The morning cometh;" if thou art willing to be convinced, thou art not far from the kingdom of God. If thou shouldst reject Jesus, whither wilt thou go for a refuge and for a guide? 2. *There is a night of worldliness.* Many are living for selfish gratification and for this life only. For the worldly the morning waiteth. Behold, Christ stands at the door and knocks! He is the light and the life of men; with His entrance into the heart the morning cometh. 3. *There is a night of penitential sorrow.* When the morning cometh to the awakened sinner, the light is sometimes, as with Saul of Tarsus, a blinding as well as revealing light. To him—the sorrowing, praying, believing penitent—the morning came. And so it ever is. 4. *There is the night of suffering.* There never comes an hour in this world when suffering is unknown. Count it all joy, if it must needs be that ye shall suffer. 5. *There is the night of weariness and disappointment.* The Christian worker, toil-worn, may sometimes inquire, "Watchman, what of the night?" He has wrongly hoped, it may be, at the same time to carry the seed-basket, to put in the sickle, and to bring his sheaves with him. Learn to labour faithfully and to wait. The Son of God is come!

CONCLUSION.—Fail not to remember that while the morning cometh for all who willingly hear and obey the Gospel, the night also cometh for the disobedient and unbelieving. Come, ye who wander in the darkness, while yet there is room, to Him who is the bright and morning star, the sun of righteousness, the light and life of the world, and for you there will come a morning which will be the beginning of a blissful, glorious, and never-ending day.—*D. D. Currie: Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi. pp. 213-215.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL.

(*Missionary Sermon.*)

XXV. 6-8. *And in this mountain, &c.*

What the spirit of prophecy has here recorded is the testimony of Jesus and of His salvation, the subject presented to our view being *the blessings of the Gospel of the Son of God.* They are described in their general nature, in their unrivalled excellence, and in their universal extent.

I. **The blessings of the Gospel are here described in their general nature,** as including instruction for the ignorant, consolation for the sorrowful, and life for the dead. They thus correspond to the state of man without the Gospel, which is a state of darkness, misery, and death.

1. *The natural state of fallen man is a state of moral darkness.* A veil is upon him, by which those things which make for his peace and essentially affect his well-being are hidden from his eyes. It is a triple veil. (1.) There is the fold of *native ignorance.* The merely natural man is totally ignorant of God and eternity. He knows not whence he came or whither he is going. He is altogether "sensual, having not the Spirit," and cannot know those things of the Spirit of God which are only spiritually discerned. Hence, ever since the Fall, darkness has covered the earth and gross darkness the people. (2.) There is the yet thicker fold of *moral corruption.* Sin has exactly the same tendency in each particular case as in the case of Adam. It darkens the understanding by its deceitfulness, as well as hardens the heart by its malignity. It tends to extinguish that candle of the Lord which shines in the conscience, and to render useless and unavailing those other means which God has provided for delivering us from the night of Nature. Those in whom it reigns choose the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil (cf. Eph. iv. 17, 18). (3.) There is the fold of *Satanic infatuation.* "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." He rules in the hearts of all the children of disobedience; and his kingdom is the kingdom of delusion and darkness. He beguiled Eve through his subtilty, and he still labours to corrupt and darken the minds of men (2 Cor. iv. 4).

All this is true of all the unregenerate, however diversified may be their external condition and local circumstances. Hence multitudes even of nominal Christians are fit objects of our compassionate care and exertion. But the description of the text is still more applicable to the case of heathen nations not yet visited by the Gospel. They have not the light which nominal Christians do not allow to shine into them; in general, they have *no* effectual light. Over them is cast the veil not merely of ignorance and sin, but of *superstition* and *false religion*, than which nothing can be more fatally opposed to the entrance of light and the operation of Divine grace. Their very systems of religion are the means of perpetuating folly and vice, instead of reclaiming them to wisdom and righteousness. In many cases that "religion" sanctions and prescribes the most cruel of sacrifices and the most licentious of rites. In Christendom men may be superstitious and wicked, licentious and cruel, but it is *because they neglect their religion.* In heathen and Mohammedan countries, they are so *because* they attend to their religion. They breathe its genuine spirit and exemplify its proper tendency. All that is deemed sacred and authoritative in the name of religion unites with all the ignorance and depravity of fallen man, and with all the subtilty and power of the Prince of Darkness to produce and perpetuate a system of error and iniquity. False religion may pretend to be a sun which enlightens, but it is really a veil which darkens all who come under its power —a veil much more effectual to favour the ravages of sin, misery, and death than even any of the coverings previously mentioned.

2. *Man is described in the text as the child not only of darkness and error, but also of misery and death.* For ignorance is the mother, not of devotion, but of sin, in all its multiplied forms. And sin is invariably linked to misery! The wretchedness of men bears an exact correspondence to their ignorance and wickedness (Rom. iii. 16, 17).

If this statement be true of natural men in general, it is still more awfully verified in the condition of the heathen world in particular. Infidel travellers who have cheated the public from time to time by highly-coloured pictures of the happiness of pagans, ought not on such a point to be believed. It cannot be that in the dark places of the earth, the habitations of cruelty, no groans should be heard, no tears be seen. The fact is, that while heathenism leaves its

votaries to the unmitigated operation of all those natural and moral causes of distress which are common to man in general, it opens many new sources of misery, inflicts many additional desolations, creates many forms of terror, suffering, and destruction, which are peculiar to itself. All men are born to tears, because born in sin; but the tears of pagans are often tears of blood. Every groan they heave is big with double wretchedness.

The Gospel, in its provision of blessings for the human race, adapts itself to that state of darkness, wretchedness, and mortality which I have faintly described.

1. *It removes darkness.* It reveals to us the existence, character, and will of God, our own origin, immortality, and accountableness, the way of salvation and the path of duty; and, used by the Holy Spirit as His great instrument, it changes the heart of those who receive it, and delivers them from the delusions and dominion of Satan. In these several ways does the Gospel become the instrument of illumination. By it, and in connection with it, God destroys the covering which is naturally on men's faces, and the veil that is spread over their understandings and hearts. The consequence is, in instances innumerable, that "beholding as in a glass," with unveiled face, "the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The glorious diffusion of light and purity which results from Christianity is still more striking when it obtains access to heathen nations. In proportion to the deeper gloom of their former ignorance is the splendour of the new illumination, when the Sun of righteousness arises upon them with healing in His beams. On such occasions, it may be said with peculiar emphasis, "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light,"—a light which is able to penetrate and destroy even the thickest veil of false religion.

2. *It wipes away tears.* This is here declared to be a part of its design, and experience proves it to be one of its actual operations (Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16). It leads to repentance, and so to pardon, purity, and genuine peace. It comforts in sorrow. It cheers in death.

To the heathen it is peculiarly valuable and welcome. It opens to them, in common with others, the sources of spiritual enjoyment and the hopes of eternal bliss. And besides, it abolishes pagan cruelties and diffuses principles of humanity and kindness. Hence result the amelioration of their civil institutions, the increase of domestic happiness, and the improvement of social life (H. E. I. 1122–1133).

3. *It swallows up death in victory.* It delivers every believer from the fear of death (Heb. ii. 14, 15; H. E. I. 1109–1111, 1589, 1594). God will most gloriously swallow up death in victory when He shall actually recover from the territories of the grave, by His almighty power, those spoils which death has won.

In proportion to its progress in heathen countries, the Gospel will not merely extract the sting of death, but arrest and diminish its most awful ravages. The waste of human life in many pagan lands is incalculable. As true religion increases, even in Christian countries, wars, which it has already rendered less sanguinary, will be less frequent too (chap. ii. 4).

II. **The unrivalled excellence of the blessings of the Gospel.** "A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." Variety! richness! abundance! (See pp. 253–256.) Who does not recognise, in the unrivalled excellence of the blessings the Gospel conveys, the most powerful arguments for missionary exertion? Who can think of the Gospel feast, in contrast with the famine of the heathen, without wishing that they also might be bidden to the heavenly entertainment?

III. **The universal extent of the blessings of Christianity.** "The Lord of hosts shall make unto *all* people a feast of fat things." 1. They are

adapted to all people. 2. They are sufficient for all people. 3. They were designed for all people. 4. The wide world shall, sooner or later, partake of them.

One result of this universal spread and triumph of Christianity is stated in the text: "The rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth." 1. By the successful exertions of God's people t evangelise the world, the reproach, which is at present too well-founded, of neglecting to care for those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, shall become no longer just and applicable. 2. In consequence of the general spread and influence of Christianity, the reproach of Christ, the scandal of the Cross, shall cease; and the Church, formerly despised and laughed to scorn, shall be held in great honour and reputation (chap. lx. 13–16). 3. The particular reproach of spiritual barrenness—the reproach founded on the paucity of her converts, and the small number of her children—shall then for ever cease. At present "Jacob is small," and the flock of Jesus is, comparatively, a little flock. This fact has been converted by infidels into matter of attack upon Christianity itself. They have tauntingly urged the narrow extent of our religion as an argument against its divinity. That argument admits, even now, of solid refutation. But in due season the fact itself shall be altered, and no shadow of plausibility be left for the reproach (chap. liv. 1–5).

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

1. The text should teach you your personal obligations and privileges in reference to the Gospel. The feast is spread out before *you;* to *you* are the blessings of it freely offered (chap. lv. 1–3).

2. The text teaches you the ground of missionary exertions. To partake of the feast ourselves is our first duty; but, while we "eat the fat and drink the sweet," shall we not "send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared?" Can any duty be more obviously founded in reason and justice, humanity and piety, than that of sending the bread of life to our perishing fellow-creatures? The most hateful and inexcusable of all monopolies is the monopoly of Christian truths and consolations.

3. There are great encouragements to such labour. (1.) The certainty of Divine approbation. (2.) The certainty of consequent success (H. E. I. 1166–1168). But remember, if you would share in the triumphs of the Gospel, you must share in the labour and expense of their achievement.—*Jabez Bunting, D.D.: Sermons*, vol. i. pp. 453–483.

PEACEFUL KEEPING.

xxvi. 3, 4. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, &c.*

The delightfulness and the value of peace to the nation, the Church, the family, the individual (P. D. 2664). Consider—

I. THE PROMISE. 1. **It is universal in its range.** It is made to any and every man who will trust in God. 2. It is sure. Men fail for various reasons to keep their promises, but every Divine promise is certain to be fulfilled (H. E. I. 4052, 4053). 3. **The peace which is pledged and secured to all who will fulfil the condition of the text is perfect**—so perfect that it can only be described by a repetition of the word, "*peace, peace.*" God never gives in driblets. His gifts are like Himself, perfect for their fulness, for their suitability, for their enduring qualities. God can keep His people in perfect peace when the devil accuses, when the world allures or threatens, when sickness tries, when adversity oppresses, even when the heart is sore tried, and when grim death would affright (H. E. I. 1253, 1893, 1894, 1911–1926; P. D. 2669, 2673).

II. THE CHARACTER DESCRIBED. "*Whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusted in Thee.*" Trust unites. The

mind will not be stayed upon God unless there be perfect confidence in His wisdom, power, and love. Trust and love go together. Love begets confidence, and confidence strengthens love. The whole nature must be stayed on God, and on God only. There must be no division in the heart's affections: we cannot serve God and Mammon and be kept in perfect peace. There must be trust before there can be peace; God Himself cannot give perfect peace to the untrustful.

III. THE EXHORTATION. "*Trust ye in the Lord for ever.*" We trust in the Lord when, encouraged by His promises, we hold fast to Him. It is nothing deeper, nothing more difficult than that. Its very simplicity is its difficulty. As the limpet binds itself to the rock, and is not disturbed by the dashing billows, so let the soul by an ardent affection bind itself to the Rock of Ages. The word "ever" gives a wonderful expansiveness to our text. It points at once to God's eternity and man's immortality. He is a being capable of being trusted for ever, and for ever we shall be capable of trusting Him. Our trust is to be unlimited and unintermitted; it is to be exercised at all times, under all circumstances, through all ages.

IV. THE STABLE FOUNDATION OF THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE. "*For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.*" The peace must be perfect that rests upon, and rises out of, such a solid foundation. The mountains are "everlasting" only in figure, but the foundation on which we rest is everlasting in fact (Ps. xci. 1, 2).—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

The world needs the message contained in our text. Most faces that we see are careworn. They are so because behind them there are anxious hearts distressed by fears of various kinds—by fears concerning the body, by fears concerning the soul. The vast majority of men are destitute of true peace; for while in the world there are many ways—of pleasure, of sin, of disappointment, of misery, of death—there is no way of peace. The multitudes who throng past us are miserable because the way of peace they have not known.

I. LOOK AT THE PERSON WHO IS KEPT IN PEACE. He is a person whose mind is stayed on God. A man's self, sin, pleasure, false religion, vain hopes, are every one of them troubled waves in an ocean of disquietude, and no soul can stay itself upon them, though many souls have sought to do so. Who, lying down in the very midst of the sea, can find there repose? As he lieth down upon the waves, they yield beneath him—the billows roll over him; he is sinking in the mighty deep. So with the sinner lying down in the midst of the sea and of the storm of this world apart from God. But he who lieth down upon God is as a man upon a rock, or as one in a mighty fortress; he is at peace—secure in fact and in feeling. But it is only as God is revealed to us in Christ that we may rest upon Him. Apart from Christ, He is to sinners "a consuming fire." Only through Christ may we find the blessedness we so much need, but through Christ we may find it.

II. LOOK AT THE POWER WHICH KEEPS THE BELIEVER IN PEACE. It is not the power of his own faith (H. E. I. 1970, 1975). It is not the power of his own effort, struggling to obtain confidence. It is the power of God: "*Thou* wilt keep him," &c. The sinner obtains peace by yielding himself to God (Rom. vi. 13). The believer has peace while he leaves himself in God's hands, quietly submissive, cheerfully willing that God should lead him and do with him whatever is pleasing in His sight (P. D. 2966–2968, 2970–2972). Then all God's attributes—His omniscience, His omnipotence, His faithfulness, His tender mercy—minister to his peace (P. D. 3379).

III. LOOK AT THE PEACE IN WHICH SUCH A PERSON IS KEPT. It is "*perfect peace.*" Peace in spite of all that conscience may say, of the temptations that assail us, of the troubles of life, of the certainty and mystery of death.

With the peace of pardon, all this peace flows into the soul, increasing more and more. It is the peace of Christ, the same peace which filled and sustained Him (John xiv. 27). You remember that we are shown Him with His head on a pillow, His eyes closed, His mind in unconscious repose, asleep in the midst of the wild storm at night upon the Lake of Galilee, when the waves beat upon the trembling vessel, and the wind strove to raise the waves still higher, and engulph them all. He slept, secure and peaceful, amid the storm. So does the soul of the believer that stayeth itself upon God. Upon what lay that peaceful head of Jesus but upon the unseen arm and heart of God? Men said of Christ mockingly, "He trusted in God." He did trust in God, as the most exalted believer, and far more than the most exalted believer; and in that simplicity of faith He was kept in peace, sleeping amidst the storm. So is it with the believer. O believer! is it so with you?—*Henry Grattan Guinness: Sermon in The Christian World*, 1860.

Here is the secret of life—peace, perfect peace—and the sure way of attaining it. Consider—

I. THE CHARACTER CONTEMPLATED. "*Whose mind is stayed on Thee.*" His mind is fixed with such intensity that it cannot be diverted from the object on which it is set. This object is not himself (Prov. xxviii. 26), nor his riches (Prov. xxiii. 5), nor his fellowmen (Ch. ii. 22; Jer. xvii. 4, 5), but GOD, in whom he trusts unhesitatingly, exclusively, universally. He accepts all that the Scriptures reveal concerning God, and makes these revelations the foundation of his confidence and his prayers.

II. THE PROMISED BLESSING. "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace.*" See also Jer. xvii. 7. The idea suggested is that of habitual and continued blessedness. The elements of peace are begun in the soul, and they are brought to maturity in the whole course of the future life. The peace given is like a river (chap. lxvi. 12), both for abundance and permanence. That is, while, and only while, the mind is stayed upon God (chap. xlviii. 18). Then he is *kept* in peace, for God is its finisher as well as its author; and it is "perfect peace," because it is peace of all kinds, in its highest degree, at all times, under all circumstances.

III. THE REASON FOR THE BESTOWMENT OF THE BLESSING. "*Because he trusteth in Thee.*" Faith honours God (Rom. iv. 21), and therefore those who exercise it are honoured by Him (1 Sam. ii. 30; H. E. I. 4057, 4058).

IV. THE DUTY ENJOINED. "*Trust ye*," &c. While we are listening to expositions of this text, this duty seems to be easy; but in actual life our faith is tried and often fails, because we lose sight of the promises and perfections of God. Here there come to us disappointments, difficulties, temptations to distrust. But it is our duty to struggle with them all; and if we do so, it will be our blessedness to overcome them all (chap. xl. 27–31). "Trust ye in the *Lord;* trust ye in the Lord *for ever;* for in the Lord Jehovah is *everlasting strength.*"—*James Morgan, D.D.: The Home Pulpit*, pp. 512–516.

There is sometimes a world of meaning in a single word: Country, home, *peace!* How it sometimes tells of booming cannon hushed into silence, of glittering swords sent back into their sheaths, of hundreds of homes relieved from distressing anxieties and fears, of thousands of lives respited at least for a time! How it sometimes tells of surging passions hushed into a calm, of vengeful purposes superseded, of the fires of enmity quenched, of despair giving place to hope and joy! Peace has its histories, many and pleasant; its triumphs, various and substantial; its heralds, divine, angelic, human. Ministers have messages of peace to deliver to their congregations, and in our text we have one of them.

I. THE CONDITION EXPRESSED IN THE TEXT. "*Whose mind is stayed on Thee.*"

It is a mind resting on God as the God of grace reconciling sinners to Himself through the mediation of Christ, dispensing pardon, sanctity, salvation — a mind resting, after reconciliation, on His truthfulness, wisdom, almightiness, holiness—a mind resting on His rule and government over all the forces of Nature and all the events of daily life, both national and individual.

II. THE CONFIDENCE EXPRESSED IN THE TEXT. "*Thou wilt keep,*" &c. *Thou* wilt do it; not merely delegate and intrust this to any agency whatever. Thou *wilt* do it; there is no uncertainty or peradventure about it. "In perfect peace:" peace of all kinds, and in a superlative degree; peace flowing from reconciliation; peace in the midst of unexplained mysteries; peace in the midst of adverse providences; peace amid the uncertainties of the future.—*John Corbin.*

THE SONG TO THE VINEYARD.

xxvii. 2, 3. *In that day sing ye unto her, &c.*

There are different opinions as to what is meant by "leviathan, that crooked serpent," and "the dragon that is in the sea" (ver. 1), whether the same power is signified by different names, &c. (1.) On a point concerning which learned and able men cannot see eye to eye, it would be presumptuous in me to give an opinion. (2.) If we cannot feel certain as to the literal meaning, the spiritual is plain. (3.) Neither of the expositions affects the substance of the prophecy. A great deliverance is spoken of, to be accomplished by the destruction of the enemies of the Church, and the Lord gives a command to comfort His people. There is in our text a *command* and a *promise.*

I. THE COMMAND.

1. "*Sing ye unto her.*" It is taken for granted that the spiritual condition of the Church is pleasing to God, but that the feeling of His people is in a low state. Sometimes the Lord directs His servant to reprimand them: "Show unto my people their transgression." A Church may need comfort while some of its members deserve correction. Possibly the faulty members are the cause of discomfort to the Church, and render it desirable that she should be comforted. It is so in the family. We comfort the family when a member of it has transgressed. The fact that one member needs correction causes the others to need consolation. In some cases, it requires much wisdom to decide whether an encouragement or a reproof should be given. We have seen the rod used when a kind word would have been more suitable; and some are singing songs while it would be more appropriate to sound an alarm. There is need for rightly dividing the Word of truth. "A word in its season," &c.

Possibly the accurate expositor will ask who is commanded to sing. Is it the prophets, or the priests, or the choir of the Temple? This is a poetical book, and sometimes it calls on the heavens, the mountains, and the trees of the field to sing. In this respect I would rather let the command of the text remain undecided, and say to everybody and everything, "Sing unto her!"

2. *What shall be sung to this vineyard?* Remind her in this song that she *is* "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts." The Old Testament is full of references to a vineyard, to vines, and to wine. The reason for this is, that the Bible is an Eastern book. A vineyard supposes—

(1.) *Separation.* Not the superiority of its soil to that of the surrounding country makes the vineyard, but its separation. It is not because the saints are by nature better than others that they are God's vineyard, but because they are set apart by Him. The idea of separation as regards the Church is made conspicuous in every age. The saints, the disciples, con-

stitute the flock and the vineyard of the Old Testament, the Church of the New. When I speak of a separated Church, of course I do not allude to any sect, but to the Church in general. There are hypocrites in the Churches, but none in *the* Church. It is in the world, but not of the world. The soul is in the body, but not of the body. "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. vi. 7). Ceremonials cannot plant the vine; there are necessarily ordinances, but circumcision could not make the Jews a godly people, and there were thousands of ungodly people partaking every year of the Passover. A change of heart, a change in the condition of the soul, constitutes the planting in the vineyard; not a ceremonial separation, but a change of mind; not the affixing of the stamp of a sect, but the impartation of the image of God (H. E. I. 1171–1183).

II. THE PROMISE.

A large and comprehensive one. It includes—

1. *Care.* "I the Lord do keep it." With regard to a vineyard, there is a special meaning in the word "keep." The vine requires great care. There is much work for the knife. From the pruning of the vine by the vine-dresser, there is much valuable instruction to be gained. We learn that what appear to be grievous losses may secure great gains (H. E. I. 63, 104, 126). Oh, this pruning, how painful it often is! But it is not done because the Owner of the vineyard delights in it; it proves His love. See Jochebed taking an ark of bulrushes, putting the child Moses in it, and then laying it amidst the perils of the Nile: not because she hated him! No; love was at the bottom of it all, though it appeared otherwise. It behoves the pulpit still to assure God's people of His care for them.

2. *Provision.* "I will water it." There was necessity for watering the vineyard constantly. This was done by means of trenches conveying the water to the roots of the plants. For this purpose rain-water was carefully stored in cisterns; dew was also of great service. The means of grace are somewhat like watercourses. We are dry enough and withered in appearance, but what would we be without the means of grace? What is the dew? The noiseless influences of the Holy Spirit. We will compare revivals to showers; they are not with us, like the watercourses, always. I do not know whether the natural vineyards must have water without intermission; but the vineyard of the Lord of hosts requires it "every moment," and here is His promise to supply the need.

3. *Safety.* "Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." It shall be protected from the blighting frost, from thieves and spoilers, from "the boar out of the wood," from "the little foxes that spoil the vines." "I the Lord do keep it." He will not only give His angels charge concerning it, though He will do that. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." That shall be done, and more! "For *I*, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about her, and will be the glory in the midst of her." All things are in the hand of God, and under His control they shall co-operate for her safety. It is not surprising that Moses, as he surveyed Israel from the top of Mount Nebo, should say, "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help? The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." In dwelling near God there is safety. Israel was always flourishing when with God. The safety of God's people means more than being kept together and saved from destruction: "Lest any *hurt* it!" How excellent are the promises of God!—*Gweithiau Rhyddieithol, pp.* 48–51, *by the late William Ambrose of Port Madoc, translated from the Welsh by the Rev. T. Johns, of Llanelly.*

The Storms of Life.

xxvii. 8. *In measure when it shooteth forth, &c.*

I. There is a special appropriateness in comparing the trials of life to storms. 1. *Storms are the exceptions and not the normal or common condition of the atmosphere.* "In the world ye shall have tribulation." True; but Christ in saying so does not assert that we shall have tribulation only. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Yes; but it is not said that there is nothing but trouble. "Through much tribulation," &c. Yea, through many storms the mariner has to go through life; but there is fine weather also. 2. *Storms come from God.* See what is said about trouble (Job v. 6), "*All* my springs are in THEE," the sweet and the bitter. 3. *Storms come from different directions:* the family, the Church, business, &c. 4. *Storms are unpleasant to bear.* The anxiety of the sailor's wife. The traveller on the moor. 5. *Storms leave their traces behind.* The ravages of the sea. The effects of gales on edifices. So in life. The bereaved family. The capitalist reduced to want, &c. 6. But *storms are beneficial* (Heb. xii. 10, 11).

II. The storms of life are regulated and controlled by God. It is of Him that our text speaks. Who "debates in measure?" Who "stayeth His rough wind in the day of His east wind?" He who is almighty, all-wise, and good. His greatness, as shown in the firmament, hints that He is too great to observe human beings. But notice our Saviour's teaching: while instructing us concerning His Father, He speaks not of His omnipotence, &c., but of His observation of small things (Matt. x. 29, 30). Put a green leaf or a drop of water under a microscope, and you will see myriads of living animalcules. God observes every one. "Casting all your care on Him, for *He* careth for *you*." "He" and "you!"

III. The storms of life are proportioned to His people's strength. "In measure." (See pp. 290, 291.) A Jew never exercised greater care and exactitude in weighing out his gold and diamonds than does God while meting out trials to His people. "Grace to help in time of need;" yea, and storms equal to our strength. We do not know how much our strength is. One man over-estimates his strength, another under-estimates it. "But He knoweth our frame." "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" (H. E. I. 179–188, 3674–3695).

In various ways He maintains the merciful proportion of the storm to the strength. 1. He does so sometimes *by sending the lesser storms before the greater.* Jacob at Bethel was unable to undergo the trials of Jacob at Mahanaim. By the time he reached the latter place, he had become a prince, an Israel. Carrying the least burden prepares a man for carrying the greatest (Hercules and the ox). 2. *Sometimes by sending the heaviest first.* The man may then be in the fulness of his vigour, or in spirit he may be so contumacious that some rough handling may be necessary to bring his pride into subjection. 3. *By removing one trial before another comes.* Poverty is taken away before ill-health sets in. "He stayeth His rough wind." 4. *By sending each one in its time.* "It could not have come at a worse time." Who says so? "If it had happened at another time, it would have been easier to bear." That may be so, but would it have been as profitable? It was necessary for you to *feel.* Less suffering would not have sufficed for that end.

IV. The storms of life promote purposes of wisdom and love. 1. *The Lord sometimes orders trials as chastisements.* It is not always so; we are too apt to explain everything as chastisement. But God has promised to correct (Jer. xxx. 11), and it is the promise of a father, not the threaten

ing of a judge. (1.) Sometimes one correction prevents many more. (2.) When the Lord sends trials in the way of correction, He graciously gives His children the reasons for thus dealing with them. "The iniquity which he *knoweth*" (1 Sam. iii. 13). What father would correct a child without explaining to him what it was for? And what correction would benefit the saints while ignorant of the object in view? Possibly the neighbours may not know, but he has himself a private account with God. Hence arises a consequent duty (H. E. I. 144). (3.) When God thus sends trials, they are *corrections*, and not merely punishments; manifestations not of vengeance, but of His love. A gardener uses the pruning-knife only for the good of the fruit-bearing trees in his garden. God's corrections are designed only to take away the sin of His people (see ver. 9, and Zech. xiii. 9; H. E. I. 56–74).

2. *The Lord sometimes orders trials as exhibitions of the graces of His people.* The tempest which beat upon Job was not corrective, though he thought so while it lasted (Job x. 2, xiii. 24). The trial brought out into view his trust in God: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." The Lord's purpose was to prove that Job was "a perfect and an upright man" (H. E. I. 91–98).

3. *Storms are sometimes preventive.* A fiery trial is approaching; the man is in danger, for he is too weak to withstand it; by a lesser trial he is withdrawn from it. Two ships are drawing near in a fog; they are making towards each other at a perfect angle. The top-mast of one is blown down; the men on deck bemoan the misfortune; but it was the means of slackening the pace of the vessel, and so prevented a collision. A man is sometimes laid on a bed of sickness to save his life—to save his soul!

4. *Storms sometimes prepare men for nobler work.* Moses, after being brought up in the lap of luxury, is watching the flock forty years in Midian. All the learning of Egypt is lost in a shepherd. Nay! Moses requires a double education, for he has a duplicate work to perform—appearing before Pharaoh in the palace, and leading Israel through the wilderness. *E.g.*, what good can a preacher do, if he has no *experience* of his own? (Ps. li. 12, 13; 2 Cor. i. 3–6; H. E. I. 101–108, 2464, 2465).

Some one may say that he has no knowledge of storms from experience. Wait! Peradventure thou shalt know. Should they come, *bow*. Nothing breaks, if it bends.—*Gweithiau Rhyddieithol*, pp. 78–81, *by the late William Ambrose of Port Madoc. Translated from the Welsh by the Rev. T. Johns of Llanelly.*

The Great Trumpet

xxvii. 13. *And it shall come to pass in that day, &c.*

This prophecy was literally fulfilled (Ezra i.); but it has a wider meaning, and thus also it shall be fulfilled.

I. The greatness of the Gospel. "The great trumpet." 1. *It is designed for the world.* When liberty was proclaimed for the slaves of the West Indies, the slaves of America remained in bondage. When the slaves of America were liberated, the bondmen in Cuba, Peru, &c., were not set free. But here is a blessing for the whole world. "Which shall be to all people, ... a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke ii. 10, 32). One side of the earth can only enjoy the rays of the sun at the same time; but this "light" shall shed its rays on the whole world. 2. *It is designed for the world in its most important interests.* There are inventions and scientific discoveries—such as the steam-engine, &c.—which are valuable to the whole world. But they are valuable only in regard to the present life. But the Gospel meets the wants of the soul, and concerns

the endless life beyond. 3. *It is so great that all other things in the world are small in comparison with it;* trade, learning, &c. 4. *It is so great that it bestows greatness upon everything it touches.* Upon oratory, although it is independent of excellency of speech. Upon any country in which it is proclaimed and accepted: *e.g.*, Great Britain, America. Under its shelter liberty, learning, &c., flourish (H. E. I. 1124–1132).

II. THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL. "The great trumpet shall be blown." What is the good of a trumpet without some one to blow it? (Rom. x. 14.)

1. **Who is to blow it?** Not angels (Heb. ii. 5). The law was given by the ministry of angels; by them the trumpet was blown on Mount Sinai (Acts vii. 53). But they recognise that the trumpet of the Gospel is to be blown by *man* (Acts v. 20, x. 31, 32). This treasure is in earthen vessels. Gideon's Lamps. Men are better than angels for this purpose. This is proved by the fact that God ordered it so. But there are other minor satisfactory arguments, such as: (1.) *The danger of glorifying the missionary above the mission.* (2.) *The angels' disadvantages.* They lack the necessary experience. Blessed lack, in all other respects! They have never been contaminated by sin, and hence know not how to speak to the heart of the sinner. By men the trumpet is now being blown, and will be blown to the end of time. The trumpeters are falling, ministers are dying, but the ministry is alive!

2. **How is it to be blown?** (1.) *Clearly* (1 Cor. xiv. 8). If the promises are proclaimed, care must be taken to show to whom they belong. So with the threatenings, &c. (2.) *Vigorously.* It must be done thoroughly, or not at all. (3.) *Bravely* (Eph. vi. 19). The question is not what will "take," what is popular, what would please the masses, but "What saith the Lord?"

III. THE OBJECTS OF THE MINISTRY. "They which were ready to perish." 1. *Pagans are such* (Rom. i.) "Them which sat in the region and shadow of death" (Matt. iv. 16). 2. *Every unconverted sinner.* They are all to be addressed as those who are "ready to perish." The matter cannot be compromised because they are seat-holders, contributors, &c. Your kindness shall not prevent our blowing from the trumpet the tones you need to hear.

IV. THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL. "And they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." 1. *Whence shall they come?* From their Pharisaical hiding-places, the quicksands of excuses, &c. They are bound in the chains of slavery; but "they shall come!" This is as certain as the deliverance from Babylon. Take up your harps and strike them! 2. *How will they come?* Weeping. Without delay. Confidently. 3. *Whither and to whom will they come?* (1.) To Christ; they cannot live without Him. (2.) To His house.

APPLICATIONS.—1. Thousands have come; will you? 2. God has another trumpet. — *Gweithiau Rhyddiethol* (pp. 174–176), *by the late Rev. W. Ambrose, Portmadoc. Translated from the Welsh by the Rev. T. Johns, Llanelly.*

REJECTERS OF THE GOSPEL ADMONISHED.

xxviii. 12. *To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.*

Isaiah was one of the most eloquent of preachers, yet he could not win the ears and hearts of those to whom he spoke. He spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest of the prophets, yet the message of love was treated as though it were an idle tale. His doctrine was clear as the daylight, yet men would not see it (chap. liii. 1). It was not the fault of the preacher

that Israel rejected his warnings: all the fault lay with that disobedient and gainsaying nation. The people to whom he spoke so earnestly were drunken in a double sense:—

1. They were overcome with wine (vers. 7, 8). How is it likely that the truth shall enter an ear which has been rendered deaf by this degrading vice? How is the Word of God likely to operate upon a conscience that has been drenched and drowned by strong drink? Flee from this destroyer before your bands are made strong and you are hopelessly fettered by the habit.

2. They were also intoxicated with pride. Their country was fruitful, and its chief city, Samaria, stood on the hill-top, like a diadem of beauty crowning the land, and they delighted in it. Among them were many champions whose strength sufficed to turn the battle to the gate, therefore they hoped to resist every invader, and so their hearts were lifted up. Moreover, they said, "We are an intelligent people; we are men of cultured intellect, instructed scribes, and we do not need persons like Isaiah to weary us with their ding-dong of 'precept upon precept, line upon line,' as if we were mere children at school. Besides, we are good enough. Do we not worship our God under the form of the golden calves in Dan and Bethel? Do we not respect the sacrifices and the holy days?" So spoke the more religious of them, while the rest gloried in their shame. Being intoxicated with pride, it was not likely that they would hear the message of the prophet who bade them turn from their evil ways. Pride is the devil's drag-net, in which he taketh more fishes than in any other, except procrastination.

The two forms of drunkenness are equally destructive. Whether body or soul be intoxicated, mischief will surely come of it. Let us not get drunk with pride because we are not drunkards; for if we are so vain and foolish, we shall as certainly perish by pride as we should have done by drink.

I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE GOSPEL as it is set forth in the passage before us. This Scripture does not allude to the Gospel primarily, but to the message which Isaiah had to deliver, which was in part the command of the law and in part the promise of grace: but the same rule holds good of all the words of the Lord; and indeed any excellence which was found in the prophet's message is found yet more abundantly in the fuller testimony of the Gospel in Christ Jesus.

1. The excellence of that Gospel lies, first, in its object. For

(1.) *It is a revelation of rest.* Christ's ambassadors are sent to proclaim to you that which shall give you ease, peace, quiet, rest. It is true we have to begin with certain truths that disturb and distress; but our object is to dig out the foundation into which may be laid the stones of restfulness. The object of the Gospel is not to make men anxious, but to calm their anxieties; not to fill them with endless controversy, but to lead them into all truth. The Gospel gives rest of conscience, by the complete forgiveness of sin through the atoning blood of Christ; rest of heart, by supplying an object for the affections worthy of their love; and rest of intellect, by teaching it certainties which can be accepted without question. Our message does not consist of things guessed at by wit, nor evolved out of man's inner consciousness by study, nor developed by argument through human reason; but it treats of revealed certainties, absolutely and infallibly true, upon which the understanding may rest itself as thoroughly as a building rests upon a foundation of rock. The Word of the Lord comes to give believing men rest about the present by telling them that God ordereth all things for their good; and as for the future, it brightens all coming time and eternity with promises. The man who will hear the Gospel message, and receive it into his soul, shall know the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and shall keep his heart and mind by Jesus Christ.

(2.) *It is the cause of rest.* "This is the rest wherewith ye may *cause* the weary to rest." The Gospel of our salvation is not only a command to rest, but it brings the gift of rest within itself. Let the Gospel be admitted into the heart, and it will create a profound calm, hushing all the tumult and strife of conscience, removing all apprehensions of Divine wrath, stilling all rebellion against the supreme Will, and so working in the spirit by the energy of the Holy Ghost a deep and blessed peace.

(3.) *This rest is especially meant for the weary.* "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest." Oh, ye that are weary with the round of worldly pleasure, worn with ambition, fretted with disappointment, embittered by the faithlessness of those you trusted in, come and confide in Jesus and be at rest. Here is the rest, here is the refreshing. Jesus expressly puts it: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Despondent and despairing, condemned, and in your own conscience cast out to the gates of hell, yet look to Jesus and rest shall be yours.

(4.) In addition to bringing us rest, *the message of mercy points us to a refreshing.* "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing." If the rested one should grow weary again, the Good Shepherd will give him refreshing; if he wanders, the Lord will restore him; if he grows faint, He will revive him; yea, He has begun His gracious work of renewing, and He will continue it by renewing the heart from day to day, blending the will with His own, and making the whole man more and more to rejoice in Him.

Now, note with peculiar joy that Isaiah did not come to these people to talk about rest in dubious terms, and say, "There is no doubt a rest to be found somewhere in that goodness of God of which it is reasonable to conjecture." No; he puts his finger right down on the truth, and he says, "*This is* the rest, and *this is* the refreshing." Even so we at this day, when we come to you with a message from God, come *with definite teaching;* we proclaim in the name of God that whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus hath everlasting life: this is the rest, and this is the refreshing.

Nor did he preach a rest of a selfish character. They say we teach men to get peace and rest for themselves, and make themselves comfortable, whatever becomes of others. They know better, and they forge these falsehoods because their heart is false. Are we not always bidding men look out from themselves, and love others even as Christ has loved them? We abhor the idea that personal safety is the consummation of a religious man's desires, for we believe that the life of grace is the death of selfishness. This is one of the glories of the Gospel, that "this is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest." Get rest yourself, and you will soon cause other weary minds to rest. That secret something which your own heart possesses shall enable you to communicate good cheer to many a weary heart, and hope to many a desponding mind.

2. The other excellence of the Gospel of which I shall speak at this time lies in its manner.

(1.) *It comes with authority.* The Gospel does not pretend to be a speculative scheme or a theory of philosophy which will suit the nineteenth century, but will be exploded in the twentieth. No; it comes to men as a message from God, and he that speaks it aright does not speak it as a thinker uttering his own thoughts; but he utters what he has learned, and acts as God's tongue, repeating what he finds in God's Word by the power of God's Spirit.

2. *It was delivered with great simplicity.* Isaiah came with it "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." It is the glory of the Gospel that it is so plain. If it were so profound that we must take a degree at a university before

we could comprehend it, what a miserable Gospel it would be for mocking the world with! But it is divinely sublime in its simplicity, and hence the common people hear it gladly. As the verse seems to imply, it is fitted for those who are weaned from the breast; those who are little more than babes may yet drink in this unadulterated milk of the Word. Many a little child has comprehended the salvation of Jesus Christ sufficiently to rejoice in it. I bless God for a simple Gospel, for it suits me, and thousands of others whose minds cannot boast of greatness or genius. It equally suits men of intellect, and it is only quarrelled with by pretenders. A man who really has a capacious mind is usually childlike, and, like Sir Isaac Newton, is glad to sit at Jesu's feet. Great minds love the simple Gospel of God, for they find rest in it from all the worry and the weariness of questions and of doubts.

3. *It is taught us by degrees.* It is not forced home upon men's minds all at once, but it comes "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." God does not flash the everlasting daylight on weak eyes in one blaze of glory, but there is at first a dim dawn, and the soft incoming of a tender light for tender eyes, and so by degrees we see.

4. *The Gospel is repeated.* If we do see it at once, it comes again to us, for it is "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." From morning to morning, from Sunday to Sunday, by book after book, by text after text, by spiritual impression after spiritual impression, the Divine gentleness makes us wise unto salvation.

5. *It is brought home to us in ways suitable to our capacity.* It is told to us, as it were, with stammering lips (see ver. 11), just as mothers teach their little children in a language all their own. In much of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, God condescends to lay aside His own speech and talk the language of men. He bows to us and tells us His mind in types and ordinances, which are a sort of child-language fitted for our capacity. If you do not understand the Word of God, it is not because He does not put it plainly, but because of the blindness of your heart and the besotted condition of your spirit. Take heed that you are not drunken with the wine of pride, but be willing to learn; for God Himself hath not darkened counsel by mysterious words, but He has put His mind before you as plainly as the sun in the heavens. "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little."

II. THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE TAKEN TO THE GOSPEL.

1. They are most *wanton.* Men object to that which promises them rest! Above all the things in the world this is what our troubled spirits need. Oh, the intense folly of men, that when the Gospel sets rest before them they will not hear it, but turn upon their heel. There is no system of doctrine under heaven that can give quiet to the conscience of men, quiet that is worth having, except the Gospel; and there are thousands of us who bear witness that we live in the daily enjoyment of peace through believing in Jesus, and yet our honest report is not believed; nay, they will not hear the truth.

2. Objections against the Gospel are *wilful,* even as it is here said, "This is the refreshing, yet they would not hear." When men say they cannot believe the Gospel, ask them whether they will patiently hear it in all its simplicity. No, they say, they do not want to hear it. The Gospel is so difficult to believe; so they say. Will they come and hear it preached in its fulness? Will they read the Gospels for themselves carefully? Oh, no; they cannot take the trouble. Just so. But a man who does not want to be convinced must not blame anybody if he remains in error, nor wonder that objections swarm in his mind.

3. Such objections are *wicked,* because they are rebellion against God and an insult to His truth and mercy. If this Gospel be of God, I am bound

to receive it: I have no right to cavil at it, nor raise questions, philosophical or otherwise It is mine just to say, "Does God say this and that? Then it is true, and I yield to it. Does the Lord thus set before me a way of salvation? I will run in it with delight."

4. These people raised objections that were *the outgrowth of their pride.* They objected to the simplicity of Isaiah's preaching. They said, "Who is he? You should not go to hear him; he talks to us as if we were children. Besides, it is the same thing over and over again. You may go when you like, he is always harping on the same string." Have you not heard folks say in these days concerning a true Gospel preacher, that he is always preaching about sovereign grace, or the blood of Christ, or crying out, "Believe, believe, and you shall be saved"? They sneer and say, "It is the old ditty over and over again." The passage translated "precept upon precept, line upon line," was uttered in ridicule, and sounded like a ding-dong rhyme with which they mocked Isaiah. The words were intended to caricature the preacher; though they do not suggest the idea when translated, they do suggest it readily enough in the Hebrew. There are people now living who, when the Gospel is plainly and simply preached, exclaim, "We want progressive thought; we want"—they do not quite know what they do want. Too many wish for a map to heaven so mysteriously drawn that they may be excused from following it. Multitudes prefer the Gospel shrouded in a mist; they love to see the wisdom of man shut out the wisdom of God. This was the style of objection current in Isaiah's day, and it is fashionable still.

III. THE DIVINE REQUITAL OF THESE OBJECTORS.

1. The Lord threatens them *with the loss of that which they despised.* He has sent them a message of rest and they will not have it, and therefore in the 20th verse He warns them that they shall have no rest henceforth: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." All those who wilfully reject the Gospel and take up with philosophies and speculations will be rewarded with inward discontent. Ask the preachers of that kind of doctrine whether they themselves have found an anchorage, and as a rule they will answer, "No, no; we are in pursuit of truth; we are hunting after it, but we have not reached it yet." They are never likely to reach it, for they are on the wrong track. The Gospel was made to rest conscience, soul, heart, will, memory, hope, fear, yea, the entire man; but when men laugh at all fixity of belief, how can they be rested? This is the condemnation of the unbeliever, that he shall never find a settlement, but, like the wandering Jew, shall roam for ever. Leave the Cross, and you have left the hinge of all things, and neglected the one sure corner-stone and fixed foundation, and henceforth you shall be as a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

2. *They shall be punished by a gradual hardening of heart.* They said that Isaiah's message was "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little," and justice answers them, "Even so it shall be to you a thing despised and ridiculed, so that you will go farther away from it; you will fall backward and be broken, and snared and taken" (ver. 13.) A fall backward is the worst kind of fall. If a man falls forward, he may somewhat save himself and rise again; but if he falls backward, he falls with all his weight and is helpless. Those who stumble at Christ, the sure foundation-stone, shall be broken. When opposers hope to retrieve their position, they find themselves snared by their habits, entangled in the net of the great fowler, and taken by the destroyer. This downward course is followed full often by those who begin cavilling at a simple Gospel; they cavil more and more, and be-

come its open enemies to their eternal ruin.

3. This is to be followed by *a growing inability to understand.* "For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people." Since they would not hear plain speech, God will make simplicity itself to seem like stammering to them. Men that cannot endure simple language shall at last become unable to understand it. If men will not understand, they shall not understand. A man may shut his eyes so long that he cannot open them. In India many devotees have held up their arms so long that they can never take them down again. Beware lest an utter imbecility of heart come upon those of you who refuse the Gospel.

Lastly, this warning is given to those who object to the Gospel, that *whatever refuge they choose for themselves shall utterly fail them.* Thus saith the Lord, "Judgment will I also lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." Down come the great hailstones dashing everything to shivers, the threatenings of God's Word breaking to pieces all the false and flattering hopes of the ungodly. Then comes the active wrath of God like an overwhelming flood to sweep away everything on which the sinner stood, and he, in his obstinate unbelief, is carried away as with a flood into that utter destruction, that everlasting misery, which God has declared shall be the lot of all those who refuse the living Christ.—*C. H. Spurgeon: Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1593.

False Refuges.

xxviii. 18. *Your covenant with death shall be disannulled*

Like the sinners spoken of in this chapter, most sinful men say in effect, "We have made a covenant with death," &c. (ver. 15).

I. **That he may escape the dreaded consequences of sin, the troubled sinner seeks a refuge.** He flees—1. *From the voice of reason.* The presence of a reasoning power in man is incompatible with the practice of sin. This is seen in the fact that when sinners can be brought to think, they at once admit themselves to be wrong. The moment a man commences to think about sin, that moment he becomes aware that it will not bear thinking about. It is because a sinful life is an unthinking life that God's invitations to sinners are invitations to reason (chap. i. 18; Ps. l. 22). 2. *From an accusing conscience.* The authority of conscience is supreme, and no man can sin without feeling its sting. To escape remorse, which is conscience at work, men seek a refuge. 3. *From an offended God.* Sin is offensive to God's holiness; for being pure, He must hate impurity. Because sinners are conscious that they have rendered themselves obnoxious to God, they seek a refuge. 4. *From a broken law.* In obedience to law there is safety, right, and happiness; while in disregarding law there is nothing but disaster. And from the consequences of the broken law—the broken law of God written on the heart, proclaimed in Nature, revealed in the Bible—the sinner tries to hide. 5. *From an endless future.* This more than anything else terrifies sinners and drives them to seek shelter.

II. **Sinners, blindly infatuated, seek a refuge in wrong objects.** They make a covenant with death and an agreement with hell. The terms "death" and "hell" stand for the whole class of false securities in which men seek shelter by making a covenant and agreement with them. 1. *Unbelief* is one of the more modern refuges of sin. When men can blot out of the universe the idea of God, quench the sense of moral responsibility, remove the belief in immortality, persuade themselves that there is no other world, that death

is an eternal sleep, that heaven is only an air-castle, and hell a mere chimera, they may then indulge in evil to their hearts' content. 2. *Superstition* is another. Not in open unbelief, but under the cover of a false religion others seek to shelter. Unable to shake off belief in God and in a spiritual world, they search for some system which will at once allow a profession of religion and a practice of wickedness. Nor are such systems wanting, nor are they without disciples. Romanism offers indulgences for gold and pardons for pence, and thus provides a refuge for the stronger in pocket than in brain. 3. *Annihilation* is another. According to some, such is the awfulness of the thought of extinction of being, that men revolt from it. Establish it that when sinners die they cease to live, and what better refuge for sin is possible, and what other is needed? Sinful men will soon say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." 4. *Excess* is another. When the previous ones have failed to give comfort, the sinner rushes madly into excess. The drunkard seeks in increased intemperance to drown the sorrow his indulgence has occasioned. 5. *Indifference* is the last. This is the only comfort some men can find in their career of evil. But indifference is impossible without a denial of human responsibility. Sad indeed must the condition of human nature be when brought to this.

III. **The refuges so confidently trusted in are utterly insecure.** 1. *Because they are incompatible with the real need of man.* Only that can be conducive to man's safety which meets man's need. No human need is met by infidelity, or by superstition, or by annihilation, or by indulgence, or by indifference. Any one of these, tested by this argument drawn from human necessities, will be found a refuge of lies. 2. *Because they are at variance with human instincts.* Instinctively men believe in a Divine existence, in moral accountability, and in immortality. 3. *Because they contradict human experience.* They have all been tried, and as often as they have been tried they have been found false. 4. *Because they are opposed to the teaching of revelation, both natural and Biblical.* Nature proclaims loudly against all sin-sought refuges. The teaching of Nature and the Bible is that man is incompetent to provide for his own security, and that God only, in the exercise of His Divine prerogative, can provide for sinners the security they need.

IV. **By Divine appointment the refuges so madly sought shall be totally destroyed.** "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled." 1. *By consequence of their inherent character.* They are "refuges of lies," and necessarily all refuges built on lies must perish. 2. *By necessity of strict justice.* "Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet" (ver. 17). 3. *By the exertion of Almighty power.* "And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place."

CONCLUSION.—God has mercifully provided a true refuge. He only cuts off the false that He may exhibit the true. "Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation a stone," &c. (ver. 16).—*William Brooks: Study and the Pulpit*, New Series, vol. i. pp. 413–416.

SOME ASPECTS OF MINISTERIAL DUTY.

XXX. 7. ***Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.***

Jerusalem and Judah were threatened by Sennacherib with dangers and desolations. This people's sin, for which they were reproved by Isaiah, was their trusting to the Egyptians; they were all in a hurry to obtain help from them, without seeking counsel of God and resting upon Him. Isaiah saw that the help of the Egyptians would be worthless to them, and

therefore he counselled them to "sit still," trusting in the power, providence, and promise of God, from whom too much cannot be expected.

I. **Notice the prophet's intermeddling in this important matter.** He publishes God's mind concerning it. It is the duty of ministers to meddle sometimes in public matters, whether in Church or State; they are to show Jacob their sins, and Israel their transgressions. This is a part of ministers' work, to testify against sin in all. Christ was the light of the *world;* and they should be like their Master, testifying against all works of darkness. True, the world quarrels with the servants of God because they bear testimony against its sins; and on this account many ministers who have some light, put their light in prison: "They hold the truth in unrighteousness." They do this by not bearing witness against public wrongs, and the sin and defection of statesmen. But it was a graceless expression of a graceless Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" "What am I concerned with the souls or the sins of others? What am I concerned with the public evils of the day I live in?" True religion begins at home, but it does not end there; it will come without doors with us (H. E. I. 1184–1186).

II. **Observe the manner of the prophet's address to this people.** "Therefore have I *cried* concerning this." It is the duty of ministers to be earnest and zealous in reproving sin and reclaiming sinners. They are to be both seers and criers; and when they see any danger, they should CRY, that the people may hear and flee out of harm's way.

1. This is true in regard to public wrongs and national projects which are contrary to the will of God (P. D. 2855).

2. They need to *cry* about matters of eternity, that people may secure something that death may not be able to take from them—such as these: saving knowledge, saving faith, pardon of sin, evangelical love of God in Christ, faithful labours for the honour and glory of God.—*Ralph Erskine, A. M.: Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 252, 253.

GROWING LIGHT.

XXX. 26. *Moreover, the light of the moon, &c.*

These words, doubtless, look forward to the restoration of Israel. But there are spiritual truths implied in them, which are of present and immediate application. We have here different *kinds* of light; different *degrees* of the same light; and also the *seasons* when such increase of light is vouchsafed.

I. THE LIGHT OF THE MOON. It is a real light, but it is reflected light. It does not come to us direct from the sun, but is thrown first upon the moon, and from her it comes to us. Hence its peculiarities. It is a dim light; it does not warm and quicken; it does not make things grow and vegetate. It is a waning light; sometimes it is full, but it soon begins to decline, and for a season it is wholly withdrawn. It is a light which never makes day; even at its fullest, it is still night; men occasionally walk and work in it, but usually they rest and sleep.

Why do I notice these things, which are obvious to all on a moment's reflection? Because I believe there is important Divine truth hidden under them. All Nature is a prefiguring or shadowing forth of grace and truth (H. E. I. 5, 6).

We have been describing the religious knowledge of not a few. It is moonlight; it does not come to them direct from Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, the source of all true light; it is hearsay; they have learned it from their fellow-men. It is not experimental, and hence its deficiencies. It is a vague, dim knowledge; they see nothing clearly, neither sin nor salvation, neither Christ nor themselves

neither law nor gospel, neither grace nor glory. It is a cold, heartless knowledge; it does not warm, quicken, stir their affections, influence their wills. It is a waning knowledge; sometimes they seem full of it—after a stirring sermon, or when they are in the company of frank, lively Christians—but a short time passes and it is all gone, as if it had never been. It never makes them children of the day, it never arouses them from the sleep of sin and worldliness, nor sends them forth to work for God and for eternity.

Such is this moonlight knowledge. Still it would be something if it led those who have it to Christ, the true Light. The people of Sychar had the moonlight when the woman on whom the Sun had just arisen came and cast a portion of her light upon them. But they did not rest on this; they went out of the city and saw and heard for themselves, and so many believed and were saved. But this is what many fail to do in revival times. The Lord has visited His people, has refreshed and saved them; and others speak freely of the good they have received, sing gladly their new songs, and are for the time stirred and affected. But it is only moonlight; they have never come to Him who changes not; and so when the warmth and stir of the revival passes they fall back, and perhaps become worse than before. Not a few are still in the moonlight, and are satisfied with it. You hear about Christ, perhaps can talk about Him, but this is not salvation (H. E. I. 3148).

II. THE LIGHT OF THE SUN. This comes immediately from the sun, and hence its excellence. It is a clear, bright light, and so things afar off and near at hand are distinctly seen. It is a warm light; there is heat in it; it thaws and chases away the winter; it makes spring and summer; it causes all things to grow and vegetate. It is an awakening light; it makes day, and men arise and go to their work, and wild creatures and evil-doers retire. It is a constant light. The sun never waxes or wanes; he is ever the same. True, there are wintry days, dark, dreary days, but still the sun is there, shining through the clouds, and shining them away, and soon breaking forth again in his glory. Is this the character of your religious knowledge? [Work out the details of the comparison.]

III. DIFFERENT DEGREES OF LIGHT. "The light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." Here there is only a change of degree. There is no new luminary; it is still the sun, but it is far more intense and continuous. We can conceive what would be the effect of this in the natural world. Things now invisible from their minuteness or indistinctly seen from their distance would then be clearly revealed, and fruits and flowers which cannot at present be reared in our climate would then be common and indigenous among us. There can be a sevenfold Divine light and Divine warmth. Christ has it to give. He will one day give it to all His people, and the weak shall be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. Even now He grants it to those who seek Him with the whole heart. The patriarchs, prophets, apostles had it. Nor are these peculiar, exceptional cases. I believe there is more of it than we are aware of, and probably there would be more if we did not straighten and hinder the Lord by our want of desire and expectation.

IV. THE TIMES WHEN THIS BLESSING IS VOUCHSAFED. "In the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." This evidently looks forward to the time when the long alienation between Israel and their God will be healed. But is He the God of the Jews only? Nay, of the Gentiles also. There are two opposite errors into which men fall on the reading of these promises. Some see only the Jew in them; others do not see the Jew in them at all. But there is room for both in those green pastures. Even now there are fulfilments of this pro-

mise in its truest, highest sense. Even now the light of the moon becomes as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as that of seven days. It is so, for instance, often at conversion; it is a passing from darkness into marvellous light. It is often so when the backslider returns. Look at David in the 51st psalm, what light he has got! It is so often in times of sore affliction. Then the exceeding great and precious promises come out into view, as darkness shows us worlds of light we never saw by day (Ps. xciv. 12). It is so at death, when the soul leaves its cage and soars away into heavenly light and liberty. It will be so when the Lord comes on the resurrection morn. And once more, oh! the light there will be when the Lamb opens the books and makes every mystery plain! (H. E. I. 3127, 3128).—*John Milne: Gatherings from a Ministry*, pp. 114–122).

Nobility and Security.

xxxiii. 15, 16. *He that walketh righteously, &c.*

Those were terrible times in Jerusalem. The Assyrian power was exceedingly formidable; it was as ferocious as it was strong. The Assyrian had come up into the land, yet God had given a promise to His people that they should be preserved (chap. xxxvii. 33, 34). Some in the city rested content with the promise of God, and went about their daily business feeling perfectly safe. But there were few such. A great number were afraid they would be destroyed—they were sure of it. Who was to save them, or what power could stand in the way of Sennacherib? These were the sinners and hypocrites, and the time of trial developed them. They could not live, they said; the land was smoking, for the Assyrian had set everything on fire. Some who dwell among God's people are sinners and not saints, hypocrites and not believers. When all goes well with the Church of God you cannot detect the difference. But when the time of trial comes, the hypocrites and sinners will be discovered by their own fear. Let us not be satisfied with being in Zion—in the Church; let us not rest till we are quite sure we are not sinners or hypocrites in it. If our religion is worth anything, it is worth most in the hour of trial; and if it does not stand us in good stead in the time of temptation and sorrow, what is the use of it?

I. The character of God's people. They are partly described in the words of our text, but I am obliged to go a little farther afield for one part of their character. Those who in the time of danger will be kept and comforted are a people who have a humble, patient, present faith in God. I am sure these are such, for they are described—they describe themselves—in the second verse of the chapter before us. They are a humble people, who dare not trust themselves, but trust in God. They are a praying people, who make their appeal to God under a sense of need. Their appeal is to His free grace. They are a waiting people. If at once they have not comfort and joy, they tarry and are perfectly content to abide His time, for it is sure to be best. They have a present faith in God, for "Be Thou their arm every morning" is their prayer. They did not trust in God years ago and get saved, and think they can live without faith, but they believe "the just shall *live* by faith." They look for everything to their God: "*Thou* art our salvation in the time of trouble."

Our text gives a description of these people by their various features. It describes how they walk: "He that walketh righteously." Faith has an elevating, ennobling effect upon our entire manhood. The promise belongs only to the people who come under the description; see to it that you do not take the comfort, if you do not

come under the character! Study the description of the daily walk and conversation of this blessed man who is to dwell on high.

The first feature which is described is his *tongue*. "He speaketh uprightly." If you drew a portrait of a man, you could not paint his tongue; but if you give a description of a man's character, you cannot omit his speech. A man that lies, talks obscenely, &c., is no child of God. The grace of God very speedily sweetens a man's tongue. A doctor says, "Put out your tongue," and he judges the symptoms of health or disease thereby; and surely there is no better test of character than the condition of the tongue.

Next, the *heart*. "He that despiseth the gain of oppression." Not only does he not oppress any man, nor wish to gain anything by extortion, or by any act of unrighteousness, but he looks upon it as contemptible and despises it. He likes gain if it comes cleanly to him, and it is as welcome to him as to another, but he will not have a thing he cannot pray over.

Next comes the *ear*. "That stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood." Men of war and those who delight in war will tell to one another what they did in battle and whom they slew; and in those old times there were tales of bloodshed that would have made our ears to tingle, but the good men in Jerusalem would not hear them; they could not endure it. It is not the hearing of blood alone we must avoid, but the hearing of anything tainted. The genuine Christian feels he has mischief enough in his own heart without adding to it.

Again, "He shutteth his *eyes* from seeing evil." He cannot help seeing it as he goes his pilgrimage through life, but as far as possible he tries to avoid it. He does not go and find an evening's amusement gazing upon it. It were better to be blind, deaf, and dumb than to see, and hear, and speak in some places. The true believer is a man who has himself well in hand. He has a bit in the mouths of all the horses that draw the chariot of life, and he holds them in, and will not let his ear, eye, tongue, foot, or hand carry him away. He will have nothing to do with evil: "He shaketh his hand from holding of bribes."

II. THE SECURITY OF SUCH A MAN. Notice it first, as it is pictorially described: "He shall dwell on high." The Assyrians were attacking the country, and in times of invasion men always went to the highest parts of the country to escape from the enemy. Well, this man shall have a quiet resting-place on the heights, so high up that his enemies cannot get at him. They may plunder all round, but cannot plunder him. The sentinel on the crags of inaccessible rock shall, standing out in the sunlight gleaming calmly and brightly, bid defiance to every foe. He shall dwell on the heights, out of reach of the arrows. "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rock;" not one rock, but rocks; mass upon mass of mountain shall stand between him and the foe, and there shall he dwell in perfect security. "Oh," but says one, "they will starve him out. There will be nothing for the people to eat, and they will open the doors and say, 'Come in! only give us bread.'" "Bread shall be given him," and as he could not be driven out, so he shall not be starved out, for the bread of Heaven shall be given him, if it come from nowhere else. "But even," says one, "if there may be bread brought into the city, they will run short of water, and must eventually capitulate through thirst." No, says the promise, "his water shall be sure." There shall be springs that never can be dried up within the castle itself, and they shall drink and drink as much as they will, and yet the supplies shall never be exhausted. "Now," says one, "this is poetry." Just so: it is a poetical description, but it is all founded on facts.

Look at the positive facts in the actual experience of the child of God. First, it is a matter of fact that the man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and lives as a Christian should live, lives on high. His mind is ele-

vated above the common cares, trials, and sorrows of life (H. E. I. 1080–1084, 4162, 4163). Many of you know how secure and immutable your defence is, for you have God's promise, "I will never leave nor forsake thee." "No good thing will I withhold from him that walketh uprightly." What munitions of rocks can be compared with these things in which it is impossible for God to lie? You are dwelling where you must be safe; for, first, you were chosen before the foundation of the world, and God will not lose His chosen, nor shall His decree be frustrated. Next, you have been bought with the precious blood of the Son of God Himself, and He will never lose what He has so dearly bought. You have also been quickened by the Holy Ghost and made to live unto God, and that life cannot die. You have been taken into the family of God and made His child, and your name shall never be taken out of the family register. You are joined unto Christ in one spirit; you are a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; and shall Christ be dismembered, the Son of God be rent in twain? I feel I stand where all the devils of hell cannot reach me, where the angels of God might envy me, and where I can say, "Who shall separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?" and challenge earth and hell and heaven alike—if so it please them—to assail me, for who can harm me, if my confidence be in the living God?

The poetic utterance, "Thy bread shall be given thee," is also literally true. You have sometimes had very little, but have always had *enough*. When God multiplied the meal and the oil of the widow of Zarephath, I do believe that every day Elijah lived with her she had to scrape the bottom of the barrel. We are not told it filled up at once. Just so, you may often have to reach the bottom of the barrel, and the oil may seem to come a drop at a time; this is about as much as you want, and if you get as much as you can eat at one meal, it is all the fresher, and does not breed worms like the manna in the wilderness. It is the heavenly bread we have sometimes to be anxious about; but if ministers do not feed you, God will Himself.

As for the living waters, they shall always flow both in summer and winter. They shall be within thee a well of living water springing up into eternal life. But words cannot tell the privileges of the man who dwells with God. He need not wish to change places with the Archangels.

Friend, if you are not a Christian, do not profess to be one; do not hope by mere empty profession to win the blessedness of God's people. Confess your sins, and seek the righteousness of God. Fain would I drop into your mouths that prayer, "O Lord, be gracious unto us."

As for you that are really striving to do that which is right and true, at the same time trusting alone in Jesus for your salvation, I would say to you, What a happy people we ought to be! We ought every one of us to have a shining face (H. E. I. 756–762, 3037–3039). I do not know where the Queen is just now, but if I were a dove and could fly in the air, I would soon find her, for I should see the royal flag flying on the flag-staff. Wherever the monarch is, there will the streamer be found flying. Is the King with you to-day? If so, keep the flag flying. Let the banner fly to the breeze, and let the world know that there are no people so happy, none so much to be envied, as believers in Jesus Christ. — *C. H. Spurgeon.*

Spreading the Letter Before the Lord.

xxxvii. 14. *And Hezekiah received the letter, &c.*

The letter was an insolent cartel of defiance from the Assyrian king Sennacherib, full as much of blasphemous defiance against God as of insolence

to God's servant. It represents the conflict between Assyria and Judah as being a struggle between the gods of one nation and the God of the other. The point of it is: "Don't let the God in whom thou trusteth deceive thee, saying Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hands of Assyria. Thou hast seen what Assyria has done to all lands, and is thy God any better than theirs?" So the king of Judah, very simple and child-like, picks up the piece of blasphemy and goes up to the temple and spreads it out before God. A very *naïve* piece of unconscious symbolism! The meaning of it comes out in the prayer that follows: "Open Thine eyes, O Lord, and see," &c. It is for *Thee* to act. That is the essential meaning of Hezekiah's action.

I. It was an appeal to God's knowledge. For *his* comfort it was necessary to make this appeal. That which influences and agitates us, we need in some way to spread before the Lord. When some great anxiety strikes its talons deep into our hearts, we need to have the truth made clear to ourselves. The Eyes up yonder see all about it. A plain old piece of commonplace, but, oh! there is a deep, unutterable consolation when a man realises this. "Thy Father which is in secret, *seeth* in secret."

II. It was an appeal to God's honour. His prayer was this in effect: "Hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to reproach the living God. I say nothing about myself, but it is Thine honour that is threatened. If this insolent braggart does the thing which he threatens, then it will be said, 'Forasmuch as this Jehovah was not able to save His people, therefore He let them perish;' those who worship other gods will say, 'Jehovah is a name without meaning'—*Thy* name, which is above every name!" If a man has not got something like that in his prayers, they are poor prayers. With all humility, yet with all self-confidence, ask Him, not so much to deliver you, as to be true to His character and His promises, to be self-consistent with all that He has been; and let us feel, as we have a right to feel, that if any human soul, that ever in the faintest, poorest, humblest manner put out a trembling hand of confidence towards His great hand to grasp it, was suffered to go down and perish, there is a blight and blot on the fair fame of God before the whole creation which nothing can obliterate. But the feeblest cry shall be answered, the feeblest faith rewarded! Let us grasp the thought that not only for our own poor selves—though, blessed be God, He does take our happiness for a worthy object—but because His honour and fair fame are so inextricably wound with our well-being, He must answer the cries of His people (Ezek. xxxvi. 22–24).

III. Let us take out of the story, not only what we ought to do when we go to God in prayer, but the kind of things we ought to take to Him. Every difficulty, danger, trial, temptation, or blasphemy by which His name is polluted, should be at once spread out before the Lord. But most of all the common things of everyday life! The small boy, whom one of our writers tells of, who used to pray that he might have strength given him to learn his Latin declension, had a better understanding of prayer than the men of the world can understand (H. E. I. 3756, 3757).

IV. Another lesson: If you have not been in the habit of going to the House of God at other times, it will be a hard job to find your way there when your eyes are blinded with tears, and your hearts heavy with anxiety. Hezekiah had cultivated a habit of trusting God and referring everything to Him; so he went straight into the Temple as by instinct, where he could have found his way in the dark, and spread this letter before the Lord as a matter of course. It is a poor thing when a man's religion is like a waterproof coat, that is only good to wear when it rains, and has to be taken off when the weather improves a little! If you want to get the blessedness of fellowship with God and help from

Him in the dark days, learn the road to the Temple in sunshine and gladness, and do not wait for the bellow of the pitiless storm and darkness upon the path, before you go up to the Temple of God (H. E. I. 3877–3879).

V. What do we get by this habit of spreading out everything before God?

1. Valuable counsel. I do not know anything that has such a power of clearing a man's way, scattering mists, removing misconceptions, letting us see the true nature of some dazzling specious temptations, as the habit of turning to prayer. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the thing that perplexes us is that the steadiness of the hand that holds the microscope is affected by the beating of the heart and the passionate desires and wishes, and so there is nothing defined and clear; it is all a haze. Firmness of hand, clearness of vision, come in prayer to the man who is accustomed to take the harassing "letter" and spread it out before the Lord (H. E. I. 3741–3743).

2. A very accurate and easily applied test. I do not wonder that so many of us do not like to pray about our plans and about our anxieties; it is either because the plans have no God in them, or the anxieties have no faith. Anything we cannot pray about, we had better not touch. Any anxiety that is not substantial enough to bear lifting and laying before God, ought never to trouble us. Test your lives, your thoughts, your affairs, your purposes by this. Will they stand carriage to the Temple? If not, the sooner you get rid of them the better. And then, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and," in spite of all the blatant Sennacheribs who have poured out their insolent blasphemies, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." — *Alexander Maclaren, in Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, pp. 81–85.

APPENDIX.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

TRANSLATIONS, at once accurate and varied, are among the most valuable of all helps in the study of Scripture. It was, therefore, the intention of the compiler of this volume to give in four parallel columns the translations of Isaiah which occur in the Commentaries of Alexander, Delitzsch, and Henderson, and in the *Revised English Bible.* Considerations of space have, however, compelled him to confine himself to the two first named; and it is believed that these will be acceptable even to those who possess the Commentaries whence they are taken. There they are interwoven with the comments, and a continuous study of them is thus rendered difficult. The divisions and subdivisions in the second column are those given in Delitzsch's Commentary. For a very prompt and generous permission to make this use of that great work, hearty thanks are here accorded to Messrs. T. & T. Clark of Edinburgh.

TRANSLATION

OF THE

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH,

BY JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER, D.D.*

GENERAL TITLE.—CHAP. I. 1.

The Vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

SIN AND SUFFERING.—CHAP I. 2–31.

2. Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah speaks. Sons I have reared and brought up, and they, even they, have rebelled against me. 3. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

* Reprinted from the *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, by Joseph Addison Alexander, D.D., Princeton. New and Revised Edition, edited by John Eadie, D.D., LL.D. 2 vols. 8vo. Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot.

TRANSLATION

OF THE

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH,

BY DELITZSCH AND MARTIN.*

GENERAL TITLE.—CHAP. I. 1.

Seeing of Yesha'-yahu, son of Amoz, which he saw over Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziyahu, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Yehizkiyahu, the kings of Judah.

PART I.

PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE ONWARD COURSE OF THE GREAT MASS OF THE PEOPLE TOWARDS HARDENING OF HEART.—CHAPS. I.–VI.

Opening Address concerning the ways of Jehovah with His ungrateful and rebellious nation.—CHAP. I. 2, *sqq.*

2. Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah speaketh! I have brought up children, and raised them high, and they have fallen away from me. 3. An ox knoweth its owner, and an ass its master's crib: Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

* Reprinted from the *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, by Franz Delitzsch, D.D. Translated from the German by the Rev. James Martin, B.A. 2 vols. 8vo. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

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4. A sinful nation, people heavy with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, sons corrupting themselves! They have forsaken Jehovah; they have treated with contempt the Holy One of Israel; they are alienated back again.

5. Whereupon can ye be stricken any more, (that) ye add revolt? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is not in it a sound place; (it is) wound and bruise and fresh stroke. They have not been pressed, and they have not been bound, and it has not been mollified with ointment. 7. Your land . . . a waste! Your towns . . . burnt with fire! Your ground . . . before you strangers (are) devouring it, and a waste like the overthrow of strangers. 8. And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a melon field, like a watched city. 9. Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been like Sodom, we should have resembled Gomorrah.

10. Hear the word of Jehovah, ye judges of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah! 11. For what (end) is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith Jehovah. I am full of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and the blood of bullocks and lambs and he-goats I desire not. 12. When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts? 13. Ye shall not add to bring a vain offering. Incense is an abomination to me; (so are) new-moon and Sabbath, the calling of the convocation: I cannot bear iniquity and holy day. 14. Your new-moons and your convocations my soul hateth; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing (them). 15. And when you spread your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; also when ye multiply prayer, I am not hearing; your hands are full of blood.

16. Wash you, purify yourselves; remove the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17, learn to do good, seek judgment, redress wrong, judge the fatherless, befriend the widow.

18. Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool. 19. If ye consent and hear, the good of the land ye shall eat; 20, and if ye refuse and rebel, by the sword shall ye be eaten: the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it.

21. How has she become an harlot, the faithful city! full of justice, righteousness lodged in it, and now murderers. 22. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine weakened with water. 23. Thy rulers are rebels and fellows of thieves, every one of them loving a bribe, and pursuing rewards. The fatherless they judge not, and the cause of the widow cometh not unto them.

24. Therefore, saith the Lord, Jehovah of

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4. Woe upon the sinful nation, the guilt-laden people, the miscreant race, the children acting corruptly! They have forsaken Jehovah, blasphemed Israel's Holy One, turned away backwards.

5. Why would ye be perpetually smitten, multiplying rebellion? Every head is diseased, and every heart is sick. 6. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it: cuts, and stripes, and festering wounds; they have not been pressed out, nor bound up, nor has there been any soothing with oil. 7. Your land . . . a desert; your cities . . . burned with fire; your field . . . foreigners consuming it before your eyes, and a desert like overthrowing by strangers. 8. And the daughter of Zion remains like a hut in a vineyard; like a hammock in a cucumber field, as a besieged city. 9. Unless Jehovah of hosts had left us a little of what had escaped, we had become like Sodom, we were like Gomorrah.

10. Hear the word of Jehovah, ye Sodom judges; give ear to the law of our God, O Gomorrah nation! 11. What is the multitude of your slain offerings to me? saith Jehovah. I am satiated with whole offerings of rams, and the fat of stalled calves; and blood of bullocks and sheep and he-goats I do not like. 12. When ye come to appear before my face, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? 13. Continue not to bring lying meat offering; abomination incense is it to me. New-moon and Sabbath, calling of festal meetings . . . I cannot bear ungodliness and a festal crowd. 14. Your new-moons and your festive seasons my soul hateth; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. 15. And if ye stretch out your hands, I hide mine eyes from you; if ye make ever so much praying, I do not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16. Wash, clean yourselves; put away the badness of your doings from the range of my eyes; cease to do evil; 17, learn to do good, attend to judgment, set the oppressor right, do justice to the orphan, conduct the cause of the widow.

18. O come, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah. If your sins come forth like scarlet cloth, they shall become white as snow if they are red as crimson, they shall come forth like wool! 19. If ye then shall willingly hear, ye shall eat the good of the land; 20, if ye shall obstinately rebel, ye shall be eaten by the sword! for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

21. How is she become an harlot, the faithful citadel! she, full of right, lodged in righteousness, and now——murderers. 22. Thy silver has become dross, thy drink mutilated with water. 23. Thy rulers are rebellious and companions of thieves; every one loveth presents, and hunteth after payment; the orphan they right not, and the cause of the widow has no access to them.

24. Therefore, saying of the Lord, of Jehovah

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hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will comfort myself of my adversaries, and I will avenge myself of mine enemies; 25, and I will turn my hand upon thee, and will purge out thy dross like purity (itself), and I will take away all thine alloy. 26. And I will restore thy judges as at first, and thy counsellors as in the beginning, after which thou shalt be called City of Righteousness, a faithful State.

27. Zion shall be redeemed in judgment, and her converts in righteousness; 28, and the breaking of apostates and sinners (shall be) together, and the forsaken of Jehovah shall cease. 29. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens ye have chosen; 30, for ye shall be like an oak fading (in) its leaf, and like a garden which has no water; 31, and the strong shall become tow, and his work a spark, and they shall burn both of them together, (there) shall be no one quenching (them).

THE REIGN OF THE MESSIAH, AND INTERVENING JUDGMENTS ON THE JEWS.—CHAPS. II.–IV.

II.–1. The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2. And it shall be in the end of the days, the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and exalted from the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. 3. And many nations shall go and shall say, Come, and let us ascend to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach of us of His ways, and we will go in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. 4. And He shall judge between the nations, and decide for many peoples. And they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

5. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah.

6. Because Thou hast forsaken Thy people, the house of Jacob, because they are replenished from the east and (full of) soothsayers like the Philistines, and with the children of strangers they abound. 7. And their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; and their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their treasures. 8. And their land is filled with idols, to the work of their hands they bow down, to that which their fingers have made.

9. And so the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is brought low, and do not Thou forgive them. 10. Go into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before the terror of Jehovah and from the glory of His majesty. 11. The eyes of the loftiness of man are cast down, and the height of man is brought low, and Jehovah alone is exalted in that day.

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of hosts, of the Strong One of Israel: Ah! I will relieve myself on mine adversaries, and will avenge myself upon mine enemies; 25, and I will bring my hand over thee, and will smelt out thy dross as with alkali, and will clear away all thy lead. 26. And I will bring back thy judges as in the olden time, and thy counsellors as in the beginning; afterwards thou wilt be called City of Righteousness, Faithful Citadel.

27. Zion will be redeemed through judgment, and her returning ones through righteousness; 28, and breaking up of the rebellious and sinners together; and those who forsake Jehovah will perish. 29. For they become ashamed of the terebinths, in which ye had your delight; and ye must blush for the gardens, in which ye took pleasure. 30. For ye shall become like a terebinth with withered leaves, and like a garden that hath no water. 31. And the rich man becomes tow, and his work the spark; and they will both burn together, and no one extinguishes them.

THE WAY OF GENERAL JUDGMENT; OR THE COURSE OF ISRAEL FROM FALSE GLORY OF THE TRUE.—CHAPS. II.–IV.

II.—1. The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw over Judah and Jerusalem.

2. And it cometh to pass at the end of the days, the mountain of the house of Jehovah will be set at the top of the mountains, and exalted over hills; and all nations pour unto it. 3. And peoples in multitude go and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; let Him instruct us out of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for instruction will go out from Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. 4. And He will judge between the nations, and deliver justice to many peoples; and they forge their swords into coulters, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation lifts not up the sword against nation, neither do they exercise themselves in war any more.

5. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of Jehovah.

6. For Thou hast rejected Thy people, the house of Jacob; for they are filled with things from the east and are conjurors like the Philistines; and with the children of foreigners they go hand in hand. 7. And their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; and their land is filled with horses, and there is no end of their chariots. 8. And their land is filled with —— idols; the work of their own hands they worship, that which their own fingers have made.

9. Thus, then, men are bowed down, and lords are brought low; and forgive them—no, that Thou wilt not. 10. Creep into the rock, and bury thyself in the dust, before the terrible look of Jehovah, and before the glory of His majesty. 11. The people's eyes of haughtiness are humbled, and the pride of their lords is bowed down; and Jehovah, He only, stands exalted in that day.

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12. For there is a day to Jehovah of hosts upon everything high and lofty, and upon everything exalted, and it shall come down; 13, and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lofty, and on all the oaks of Bashan; 14, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the elevated hills; 15, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall; 16, and upon all ships of Tarshish, and upon all images of desire. 17. And (thus) shall the loftiness of man be cast down, and the pride of men be brought low, and Jehovah alone exalted in that day [or, so sinks the loftiness of man and bows the pride of men, and Jehovah alone is exalted in that day].

18. And as for the idols the whole shall pass away. 19. And they shall enter into the caves of the rocks and into the holes of the earth, from before the terror of Jehovah and the glory of His majesty when He arises to terrify the earth. 20. In that day shall man cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they have made for him to worship, to the moles and the bats; 21, to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the fissures of the cliffs, from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of His majesty, in His arising to terrify the earth.

22. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of? III.—1. For, behold, the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; 2, hero and warrior, judge and prophet, and diviner and elder; 3, the chief of fifty, and the favourite, and the counsellor, and the skilful artificer, and the expert enchanter. 4. And I will give children to be their rulers, and childish things shall govern them. 5. And the people shall act tyrannically, man against man, and man against his fellow. They shall be insolent, the youth to the old man, and the mean man to the noble. 6. When a man shall take hold of his brother in his father's house (saying), Thou hast raiment, a ruler shalt thou be to us, and this ruin under thy hand; 7, in that day he shall lift up his voice, saying, I will not be a healer, and in my house is no bread, and there is no clothing: ye shall not make me a ruler of the people.

8. For Jerusalem totters and Judah falls, (because) their tongues and their doings are against Jehovah, to resist His glorious eyes. 9. The expression of their countenance testifies against them, and their sin, like Sodom, they disclose, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have done evil to themselves. 10. Say ye of the righteous that it shall be well, for the fruits of their doings they shall eat. 11. Woe unto the wicked, ill, for the thing done by his hands shall be done to him. 12. My people! their oppressors are childish, and women rule over them. My people! thy leaders are seducers, and the way of thy paths they swallow up.

13. Jehovah standeth up to plead, and is standing to judge the nations. 14. Jehovah

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12. For Jehovah of hosts hath a day over everything towering and lofty, and over everything exalted; and it becomes low. 13. As upon all the cedars of Lebanon, the lofty and exalted, so upon all the oaks of Bashan; 14, as upon all mountains, the lofty ones, so upon all hills the exalted ones; 15, as upon every high tower, so upon every fortified wall; 16, as upon all ships of Tarshish, so upon all works of curiosity. 17. And the haughtiness of the people is bowed down, and the pride of the lords brought low; and Jehovah, He alone, stands exalted in that day.

18. And the idols pass utterly away. 19. And they will creep into caves in the rocks, and cellars in the earth, before the terrible look of Jehovah, and before the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to put the earth in terror. 20. In that day will a man cast away his idols of gold, and his idols of silver, which they made for him to worship, to the moles and to the bats; 21, to creep into the cavities of the stone-blocks, and into the clefts of the rocks, before the terrible look of Jehovah and before the glory of His majesty, when He arises to put the earth in terror.

22. Oh then, let man go, in whose nose is a breath, for what is he to be estimated at? III.—1. For, behold, the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah supporter and means of support, every support of bread and every support of water; 2, hero and man of war, judge and prophet, and soothsayer and elder; 3, captains of fifty, and the highly distinguished, and counsellors, and masters in art, and those skilled in muttering. 4. And I will give them boys for princes, and caprices shall rule over them. 5. And the people oppress one another, one this and another that; the boy breaks out violently upon the old man, and the despised upon the honoured. 6. When a man shall take hold of his brother in his father's house, Thou hast a coat, thou shalt be our ruler, and take this ruin under thy hand; 7, he will cry out in that day, I do not want to be a surgeon; there is neither bread nor coat in my house: ye cannot make me the ruler of the people.

8. For Jerusalem is ruined and Judah fallen; because their tongue and their doings *are* against Jehovah, to defy the eyes of His glory. 9. The look of their faces testifies against them, and their sin they make known like Sodom, without concealing it: woe to their soul! for they do themselves harm. 10. Say of the righteous, that it is well with him; for they will enjoy the fruit of their doings. 11. Woe to the wicked! it is ill; for what his hands have wrought will be done to him. 12. My people, its oppressors are boys, and women rule over it; my people, thy leaders are misleaders, who swallow up the way of thy paths.

13. Jehovah has appeared to plead, and stands up to judge the nations. 14. Jehovah

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will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and the chiefs thereof. And ye (even ye) have consumed the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. 15. What mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord Jehovah of hosts.

16. And Jehovah said, Because the daughters of Zion are lofty, and walk with outstretched neck, and gazing with their eyes, and with a tripping walk they walk, and with their feet they make a tinkling, 17, therefore the Lord will make bald the crown of the daughters of Zion, and their nakedness Jehovah will uncover. 18. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of the ankle-bands, and the cauls, and the crescents, 19, the pendants, and the bracelets, and the veils, 20, the caps, the ankle-chains, and the girdles, and the houses of breath, and the amulets, 21, the rings, and the nose-jewels, 22, the holiday dresses, and the mantles, and the robes, and the purses, 23, the mirrors, and the tunics, and the turbans, and the veils. 24. And it shall be (that) instead of perfume there shall be stench, and instead of a girdle a rope, and instead of braided work baldness, and instead of a full robe a girding of sackcloth, burning instead of beauty. 25. Thy men by the sword shall fall, and thy strength in war. 26. And her gates shall lament and mourn, and being emptied she shall sit upon the ground. IV.—1. And in that day seven women shall lay hold on one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let thy name be called upon us, take thou away our reproach.

2. In that day shall the Branch of Jehovah be for honour and for glory, and the fruit of the earth for sublimity and beauty, to the escaped of Israel. 3. And it shall be that the left in Zion and the spared in Jerusalem shall be called holy, every one written to life in Jerusalem, 4, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and the bloodguiltiness of Jerusalem shall purge from its midst by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning. 5. And Jehovah will create over the whole extent of mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory *there shall be* a covering; 6, and there shall be a shelter for a shadow by day from heat, and for a covert and for a hiding-place from storm and from rain.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.—CHAP. V.

1. I will sing, if you please, of my friend, my friend's song of his vineyard.

My friend had a vineyard in a hill of great fertility; 2, and he digged it up, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with Sorek, and built a tower in the midst of it; and he waited for it to produce grapes, and it produced wild grapes.

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will proceed to judgment with the elders of His people, and its princes. And ye, ye have eaten of the vineyard; prey of the suffering is in your houses. 15. What mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the suffering? thus saith the Lord of hosts.

16. Jehovah hath spoken: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk about with extended throat, and blinking with the eyes, walk about with tripping gait, and tinkle with their foot-ornaments: 17, the Lord of all makes the crown of the daughters of Zion scabbed, and Jehovah will uncover their shame. 18. On that day the Lord will put away the show of the ankle-clasps, and of the head-bands, and of the crescents; 19, the ear-rings, and the arm-chains, and the light veils; 20, the diadems, and the stepping-chains, and the girdles, and the smelling-bottles, and the amulets; 21, the finger-rings, and the nose-rings; 22, the gala dresses, and the sleeve-frocks, and the wrappers, and the pockets; 23, the hand-mirrors, and the Sindu-cloths, and the turbans, and the gauze mantles. 24. And instead of balmy scent there will be mouldiness, and instead of artistic ringlets a baldness, and instead of the dress-cloak a frock of sack-cloth, branding instead of beauty. 25. Thy men fall by the sword, and thy might in war. 26. Then will her gates lament and mourn, and desolate is she and sits down upon the ground. IV.—1. And seven women lay hold of one man in that day, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own clothes; only let thy name be named upon us, take away our reproach.

2. In that day will the Sprout of Jehovah become an ornament and glory, and the fruit of the land pride and splendour for the redeemed of Israel. 3. And it will come to pass, whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem, holy will he be called, all who are written down for life in Jerusalem: 4, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged away the blood-guiltinesses of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of sifting. 5. And Jehovah creates over every spot of mount Zion, and over its festal assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke, and the shining of flaming fire by night; for over all the glory comes a canopy; 6, and it will be a booth for shade by day from the heats of the sun, and for a refuge and covert from storm and from rain.

JUDGMENT OF DEVASTATION UPON THE VINEYARD OF JEHOVAH.—CHAP. V.

Closing Words of the First Cycle of Prophecies.

1. Arise, I will sing of my beloved, a song of my dearest touching his vineyard.

My beloved had a vineyard on a fatly-nourished mountain-horn, 2, and dug it up and cleared it of stones, and planted it with noble vines, and built a tower in it, and also hewed out a wine-press therein; and hoped that it would bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

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3. And now, O inhabitant of Jerusalem and man of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. 4. What more is there to be done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why did I wait for it to bear grapes, and it bore wild grapes? *

5. And now I will let you know if you please what I am about to do to my vineyard: Remove its hedge, and it shall become a pasture; break down its wall, and it shall become a trampling-place; 6, and I render it a desolation. It shall not be pruned and it shall not be dressed, and there shall come up thorns and briers. And I will lay my commands upon the clouds from raining rain upon it. 7. For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the man of Judah is the plant of His pleasures. And He waited for judgment, and behold bloodshed, for righteousness, and behold a cry!

8. Woe to the joiners of house with house, field to field they bring together, even to a failure of place, and ye are made to dwell by yourselves in the midst of the land. 9. In my ears Jehovah of hosts (is saying), Of a truth many houses shall become a desolation, great and good for want of an inhabitant. 10. For ten acres shall make one bath, and a bower of seed shall produce an ephah.

11. Woe to those rising early in the morning to pursue strong drink, delaying in the twilight (until) wine inflames them. 12. And the harp and the viol, the tabret, and the pipe, and wine (compose) their feasts; and the work of Jehovah they will not look at, and the operation of His hands they have not seen.

13. Therefore my people has gone into exile for want of knowledge, and their glory are men of hunger, and their multitude dry with thirst. 14. Therefore the grave has enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure, and down goes her pomp and her noise and her crowd and he that rejoices in her; 15, and man is brought low, and man is cast down, and the eyes of the lofty are cast down; 16, and Jehovah of hosts is exalted in judgment, and the Mighty, the Holy One, is sanctified in righteousness; 17, and lambs shall feed as (in) their pasture, and the wastes of the fat ones shall sojourners devour.†

18. Woe to the drawers of iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as with a cart-rope; 19, those who say, Let Him speed, let Him hasten His work that we may see; and

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3. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard! 4. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore did I hope that it would bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes? *

5. Now then, I will tell you what I will do at once to my vineyard: Take away its hedges, and it shall be for grazing; pull down its wall, and it shall be for treading down; 6, and I will put an end to it: it shall not be pruned nor dragged, and it shall break out in thorns and thistles, and I will command the clouds to rain no rain over it. 7. For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the plantation of His delight: He waited for justice, and behold, grasping; for righteousness, and behold, a shriek!

8. Woe unto them that join house to house, who lay field to field, till there is no more room, and ye alone are dwelling in the midst of the land. 9. Into mine ears, Jehovah of hosts: Of a truth many houses shall become a wilderness, great and beautiful ones deserted. 10. For ten yokes of vineyard will yield one pailful, and a quarter of seed-corn will produce a bushel.

11. Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning to run after strong drink: who continue till late at night with wine inflaming them! 12. And guitar and harp, kettle-drum, and flute, and wine is in their feast; but they regard not the work of Jehovah, and see not the purpose of His hands.

13. Therefore my people go into banishment without knowing; and their glory will become starving men, and their tumult men dried up with thirst. 14. Therefore the under-world opens its jaws wide, and stretches open its mouth immeasurably wide; and the glory of Jerusalem descends, and its tumult, and noise, and those who rejoice within it. 15. Then are mean men bowed down, and lords humbled, and the eyes of lofty men are humbled. 16. And Jehovah of hosts shows Himself exalted in judgment, and God the Holy One sanctifies Himself in righteousness; 17, and lambs feed as upon their pasture, and nomad shepherds eat the waste places of the fat ones.†

18. Woe unto them that draw crime with cords of lying, and sin as with the rope of the waggon; 19, who say, Let Him hasten, accelerate His work, that we may see; and let the

* Barnes, Birks, Henderson, Kay, Strachey, and the *Revised English Bible*, translate this clause substantially as it is in the A. V.:—*e.g.*, *Henderson*, "Why, when I expected it to produce grapes did it produce bad grapes?

† Henderson's translation of this paragraph is especially vigorous and beautiful:—

13. Therefore my people are led captive at unaware
Their nobility are starvelings,
And their multitude are parched with thirst.

14. Therefore Sheol enlarges her appetite,
And gapes immeasurably with her mouth;
And down go her nobility and her multitude,
Her noisy throng, and whoever in her that exulteth.

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let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know (it).

20. Woe unto those saying to evil good, and to good evil, putting darkness for light and light for darkness, putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

21. Woe unto the wise in their (own) eyes, and the prudent in their own estimation.

22. Woe to the mighty men that drink wine, and men of strength that mingle strong drink; 23, justifying the guilty as the result of a bribe, and the righteousness of the righteous they will take from him.

24. Therefore as a tongue of fire devours chaff, and as ignited grass falls away, their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom as fine dust shall go up. For they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and the word of the Holy One of Israel they have treated with contempt. 25. Therefore the anger of Jehovah has burned against His people, and He stretched forth His hand against them, and smote them, and the mountains trembled, and their carcass was like sweeping in the midst of the streets.

In all this His anger has not turned back, and still His hand is stretched out; 26, and He raises a signal to the nations from afar, and whistles for him from the ends of the earth; and behold in haste, swift he shall come. 27. There is no one faint, and there is no one stumbling among them. He sleeps not, and he slumbers not, and the girdle of his loins is not opened, and the latchet of his sandals is not broken; 28, whose arrows are sharpened and all his bows bent; the hoofs of his horses like flint are reckoned, and his wheels like a whirlwind. 29. He has a roar like the lioness, and he shall roar like the young lions, and shall growl, and seize the prey, and secure it, none delivering (it). 30. And he shall roar against him in that day like the roaring of a sea. And he shall look to the land, and behold darkness! Anguish and light! It is dark in the clouds thereof! *

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counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may experience it.

20. Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who give out darkness for light, and light for darkness; who give out bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

21. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.

22. Woe unto those who are heroes to drink wine, and brave men to mingle strong drink; 23, who acquit criminals for a bribe, and take away from every one the righteousness of the righteous.

24. Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours stubble, and hay sinks together in the flame, their root will become like mould, and their blossom fly up like dust; for they have despised the law of Jehovah of hosts, and scornfully rejected the proclamation of the Holy One of Israel. 25. Therefore is the wrath of Jehovah kindled against His people, and He stretches His hand over them, and smites them; then the hills tremble, and their carcass become like sweepings in the midst of the streets.

For all this His anger is not appeased, and His hand is stretched out still, 26, and lifts up a banner to the distant nations, and hisses to it from the end of the earth; and, behold, it comes with haste swiftly. 27. There is none exhausted, and none stumbling among them: it gives itself no slumber, and no sleep; and to none is the girdle of his hips loosed; and to none is the lace of his shoes broken; 28, he whose arrows are sharpened, and all his bows strung; the hoofs of his horses are counted like flint, and his wheels like the whirlwind. 29. Roaring issues from it as from the lioness: it roars like lions, and utters a low murmur; seizes the prey, carries it off, and no one rescues. 30. And it utters a deep roar over it in that day like the roaring of the sea: and it looks to the earth, and behold darkness, tribulation, and light; it becomes night over it in the clouds of heaven.*

THE VISION OF THE MOST HIGH. —CHAP. VI.

1. In the year that king Uzziah died (B.C. 758), I saw also the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and His skirts filling the palace. 2. Seraphim standing above it. Six wings to each. With two he covers his face, and with two he covers his feet, and

THE PROPHET'S ACCOUNT OF HIS OWN DIVINE MISSION.—CHAP. VI.

1. The year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord of all sitting upon a high and exalted throne, and His borders filling the temple. 2. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and

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15. The man of mean condition is bowed down,
And the man of rank is brought low;
And the eyes of the haughty are humbled.
16. But Jehovah of hosts is exalted through justice,
And the Holy God is sanctified through righteousness.

17. The lambs shall feed wherever they are driven,
And the waste fields of the rich, strange flocks shall consume.

*And one shall look to the earth,
And lo! darkness! trouble!
And the light is obscured by the gloomy clouds.
—*Barnes.*

And one shall look unto the earth, *and, behold, darkness;* even the light is an adversary (or, is anguish); dark is it amidst the clouds thereof.—*Kay.*

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with two he flies. 3. And one cried to another, and said,

Holy, Holy, Holy! *is* Jehovah of hosts!
The fulness of the whole earth is His glory!

4. Then stirred the bases of the thresholds at the voice that cried, and the house is filled with smoke.

5. And I said, Woe is me, for I am undone! for a man of impure lips am I, and in the midst of a people of impure lips I am dwelling: for the King, Jehovah of hosts, my eyes have seen.

6. Then there flew to me one of the seraphim, and in his hand a live coal; with tongs he took it from off the altar; 7, and he caused it to touch my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquity is gone, and thy sin shall be atoned for.

8. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I; behold me; send me.

9. And He said, Go and say to this people, Hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but know not. 10. Make fat the heart of this people, and its ears make heavy, and its eyes smear; lest it see with its eyes, and with its ears hear, and its heart understand, and it turn to me, and be healed.

11. And I said, How long, Lord?

And He said, Until that cities are desolate for want of an inhabitant, and houses for want of men, and the land shall be desolate, a waste; 12, and Jehovah shall have put far off the men, and great shall be that which is left in the midst of the land. 13. And yet in it a tenth shall return and be for a consuming; like the terebinth and like the oak which in falling have substance in them, a holy seed (is) the substance of it.*

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with two he did fly. 3. And one cried to the other, and said,

Holy, holy, holy! is Jehovah of hosts!
Filling the whole earth is His glory.

4. And the foundation of the threshold shook with the voice of them that cried; and the house became full of smoke.

5. Then said I, Woe to me! for I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I am dwelling among a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

6. And one of the seraphim flew to me with a red-hot coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7. And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Behold, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away; and so thy sin is expiated.

8. Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Behold me here; send me!

9. He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear on, and understand not; and look on, but perceive not. 10. Make ye the heart of this people greasy, and their ears heavy, and their eyes sticky; that they may not see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and their heart understand, and they be converted, and one heal them.

11. Then said I, Lord, how long?

And He answered, Until towns are wasted without inhabitant, and houses are without men, and the ground shall be laid waste, a wilderness, 12, and Jehovah shall put men far away, and there shall be many forsaken places within the land. 13. And is there still a tenth therein, this also is given up to destruction, like the terebinth and like the oak, of which, when they are felled, only a root stump remains: such a root stump is the holy seed.*

PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE REIGN OF AHAZ. —CHAPS. VII.–XII.

1. And it was in the days of Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin, king of Aram [or Syria], and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to war against it; and he was not able to war against it. 2. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria resteth upon Ephraim: and his heart and the heart of the people shook, like the shaking of the trees of a wood before a wind.

3. And Jehovah said to Isaiah son of Amoz, Go out to meet Ahaz, thou and Shear-jashub thy son, to the end of the conduit of the upper pool, to the highway of the fuller's field. 4. And thou shalt say to him,

PART II.

CONSOLATION OF IMMANUEL IN THE MIDST OF THE ASSYRIAN OPPRESSIONS.—CHAPS. VII.–XII.

Divine sign of the Virgin's wondrous Son.—CHAP. VII.

1. It came to pass, in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aramæa, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, and (he) could not make war upon it. 2. And it was told the house of David, Aram has settled down upon Ephraim: then his heart shook, and the heart of the people, as trees of the wood shake before the wind.

3. Then said Jehovah to Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shear-jashub thy son, to the end of the aqueduct of the upper pool, to the road of the fuller's field; 4, and say unto him, Take heed, and keep quiet;

* And though there be only a tenth part in it, even that shall be again consumed; yet as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose stocks [stumps] remain to them, when they are felled, so the holy seed shall be the stock [stump] thereof.—*Strachey.*

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Be cautious and be quiet; fear not, nor let thy heart be soft before these two smoking tails of firebrands, in the heat of the anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. 5. Because Syria has devised evil against thee, also Ephraim and Remaliah's son, saying, We will go up into Judah and vex it, and make a breach in it (thereby subduing it) to ourselves, and let us make a king in the midst of it, to wit, the son of Tabeal: 7, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, and it shall not be; 8, because the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin, for in yet sixty-and-five years shall Ephraim be broken from (being) a people; 9, for the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you will not believe (it is) because you are not to be established.

10. And Jehovah added to speak unto Ahaz, saying, 11, Ask for thee a sign from Jehovah thy God, ask deep or high above. 12. And Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not tempt Jehovah. 13, And he said, Hear, I pray you, O house of David! is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God? 14. Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold! the virgin pregnant and bringing forth a son, and she calls his name Immanuel. 15. Curds and honey shall he eat until he shall know (how) to reject the evil and choose the good; 16, for before the child shall know (how) to reject the evil and to choose the good, the land, of whose two kings thou art afraid, shall be forsaken.

17. Jehovah will bring upon thee, and on thy people, and on thy father's house, days which have not come since the departure of Ephraim from Judah, to wit, the king of Assyria. 18. And it shall be in that day that Jehovah will whistle for the fly which is in the edge of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee which is in Assyria; 19, and they come and rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the clefts of rocks, and in all thorn-hedges, and in all pastures. 20. In that day will the Lord shave, with a razor hired in the parts beyond the river, with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet, and also the beard will it take away. 21. And it shall be in that day (that) a man shall save alive a young cow and two sheep; 22, and it shall be (that) from the abundance of the yielding of milk, he shall eat butter; for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the midst of the land. 23. And it shall be in that day (that) every place where there shall be a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, shall be for thorns and briers. 24. With arrows and with bows shall one go thither, because thorns and briers shall the whole land be; 25, and all the hills which are digged with the hoe, thou shalt not go (even) there for fear of briers and thorns, and they shall be for a sending-place of cattle and a trampling-place of sheep.

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and let not thy heart become soft from these two smoking firebrand stumps! at the fierce anger of Rezin, and Aram, and the son of Remaliah. 5. Because Aram hath determined evil over thee, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, saying, 6, We will march against Judah, and terrify it, and conquer it for ourselves, and make the son of Tabeal king in the midst of it: 7, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It will not be brought about, and will not take place. 8. For head of Aram is Damascus, and head of Damascus Rezin, and in five-and-sixty years will Ephraim as a people be broken to pieces. 9. And head of Ephraim is Samaria, and head of Samaria the son of Remaliah; if ye believe not, surely ye will not remain.

10. And Jehovah continued speaking to Ahaz as follows: 11, Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God, going deep down into Hades, or high up to the height above. 12. But Ahaz replied, I dare not ask, and dare not tempt Jehovah. 13. And he spake, Hear ye now, O house of David! Is it too little to you to weary men, that ye weary my God also? 14. Therefore the Lord, He will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin conceives, and bears a son, and calls his name Immanuel. 15. Butter and honey will he eat, at the time that he knows to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16. For before the boy shall understand to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land will be desolate, of whose two kings thou art afraid.

17. Jehovah will bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days such as have not come since the day when Ephraim broke away from Judah—the king of Asshur. 18. And it comes to pass in that day, Jehovah will hiss for the fly which is at the end of the Nile-arms of Egypt, and the bees that are in the land of Asshur; 19, and they come and settle all of them in the valleys of the slopes, and in the clefts of the rocks, and in all the thorn-hedges, and upon all grass-plats. 20. In that day will the Lord shave with a razor, the thing for hire on the shore of the river, with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet: and even the beard it will take away. 21. And it will come to pass in that day, that a man will keep a small cow and a couple of sheep; 22, and it comes to pass, for the abundance of the milk they will give he will eat cream: for butter and honey will every one eat that is left within the land. 23. And it will come to pass in that day, every place where a thousand vines stood at a thousand silverlings will have become thorns and thistles. 24. With arrows and with bows will men go, for the whole land will have become thorns and thistles. 25. And all the hills that were accustomed to be hoed with the hoe, thou wilt not go to them for fear of thorns and thistles; and it has become a gathering-place for oxen, and a treading-place for sheep.

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1. And Jehovah said to me, Take thee a great tablet, and write upon it with a man's pen, to Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 2. And I (Jehovah) will take to witness for me credible witnesses, to wit, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah.

3. And I approached unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son, and Jehovah said to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz: 4, for before the child shall know (how) to cry, My father, and my mother, they shall take away the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria before the king of Assyria.

5. And Jehovah added to speak to me again, saying—

6. Because this people hath forsaken the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and joy with respect to Rezin and the son of Remaliah, 7, therefore, behold! the Lord (is) bringing up upon them the waters of the river, its strong and many waters, to wit, the king of Assyria and all his glory, and it shall come up over all its channels and go over all its banks, 8, and it shall pass over into Judah, overflow and pass through, to the neck shall it reach, and the spreading of its wings shall be the filling of the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel!

9. Be wicked and be broken, and give ear all remote parts of the earth! Gird yourselves and be broken; gird yourselves and be broken! 10. Devise a plan, and it shall be defeated; speak a word, and it shall not stand: for God (is) with us.

11. For thus said Jehovah unto me in strength of hand, and instructed me away from walking in the way of this people, saying, 12, Ye shall not call conspiracy everything which this people calleth conspiracy, and its fear ye shall not fear nor be afraid. 13. Jehovah of hosts, Him shall ye sanctify; and He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread. 14 And He shall be for a holy thing, and for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to the two houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15. And many shall stumble over them, and fall and be broken and be snared, and be taken.

16. Bind up the testimony, seal the law, in my disciples. 17. And I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and will expect Him. 18. Behold, I and the children which Jehovah hath given me are (for) signs and for wonders in Israel from Jehovah of hosts, the (One) dwelling in mount Zion. 19. And when they shall say to you, Seek unto the spirits and to the wizards, the chirpers and the mutterers: should not a people seek to its God, for the living to the dead? 20. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, (they are they) to whom there is no dawn.

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TWO OMENS OF THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. —CHAP. VIII. 1–4.

1. Then Jehovah said to me, Take a large slab, and write upon it with common strokes, "In speed spoil, booty hastens;" and I will take to me trustworthy witnesses, Uriyah the priest, and Zecharyahu the son of Yeberechyahu.

3. And I drew near to the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son: and Jehovah said to me, Call his name In-speed-spoil-booty-hastens (Maher-shalal-hash-baz): 4, for before the boy shall know how to cry, My father, and my mother, they will carry away the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, before the king of Asshur.

ESOTERIC ADDRESSES.—CHAP. VIII. 5–XII.

A.—Consolation of Immanuel in the coming darkness.—CHAP. VIII. 5–IX. 6.

5. And Jehovah proceeded still further to speak to me, as follows:—

6. Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Siloah that go softly, and regardeth as a delight the alliance with Rezin and the son of Remalyahu, 7, therefore, behold! the Lord of all bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, the mighty and the great, the king of Assyria, and all his military power: and he riseth over all his channels, and goeth over all his banks, 8, and presses forward into Judah, overflows and pours onward, till it reaches the neck, and the spreadings out of its wings fill the breadth of thy land, Immanuel.

9. Exasperate yourselves, O nations, and go to pieces; and see it, all who are far off in the earth! Gird yourselves, and go to pieces; gird yourselves, and go to pieces! 10. Consult counsel, and it comes to nought; speak the word, and it is not realised: for with us is God.

11. For Jehovah hath spoken thus to me, overpowering me with God's hand, and instructing me not to walk in the way of this people, saying, 12. Call ye not conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy; and what is feared by it, fear ye not, neither think ye dreadful. 13. Jehovah of hosts, sanctify Him; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your terror. 14. So will He become a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (vexation) to both the houses of Israel, a snare and a trap to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15. And many among them shall stumble, and shall fall; and be dashed to pieces, and be snared and taken.

16. Bind up the testimony, seal the lesson in my disciples. 17. And I will wait upon Jehovah, who hides His face before the house of Jacob, and hope for Him. 18. Behold, I and the children which God hath given me for signs and types in Israel, from Jehovah of hosts, who dwelleth upon mount Zion. 19. And when they shall say to you, Inquire of the necromancers, and of the soothsayers that chirp and whisper:—should not a people inquire of its God? for the living to the dead? 20. To the teaching of God, and to the testimony! If they do not accord with

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21. And they shall pass through it hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall be that when they are hungry they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and shall look upward. 22. And to the earth he shall look; and behold distress and darkness, dimness of anguish, and (into) darkness (he shall be) driven. [— Or, The dimness of anguish and of darkness is dispelled.]

IX.—1. For (there shall) not (be) darkness (for ever) to her who is now distressed. As the former time degraded the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, so the latter glorifies the way of the sea, the bank of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

2. The people, those walking in the dark, have seen a great light: the dwellers in the shadow of death, light has beamed upon them. 3. Thou hast enlarged the nation, Thou hast increased its joy: (they) rejoice before Thee like the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil; 4, that the yoke of his burden, and the rod of his shoulder, and the staff of the one driving him, Thou hast broken as in the day of Midian. 5. For all the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning, food of fire. 6. For a son is born to us, a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder, and his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7. To the increase of the government and to the peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it and to confirm it, in justice and in righteousness from henceforth and for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts shall do this.

8. The Lord sent a word unto Jacob, and it came down into Israel. 9. And they know, the people, all of them, Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, in pride and in greatness of heart saying, 10, "Bricks are fallen, and hewn stone will we build; sycamores are felled, and cedars will we substitute." 11. And (now) Jehovah raises up above him the enemies of Rezin, and he will instigate his own enemies: 12, Aram before, and Philistia behind, and they devour Israel with open mouth. For all this His wrath does not turn back, and still His hand is stretched out.

13. And the people has not turned to Him that smote them, and Jehovah of hosts they have not sought. 14. And Jehovah has cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and root, in one day. 15. The elder and the favourite, he (is) the head, and the prophet teaching falsehood, he (is) the tail. 16. The leaders of this people have been seducers, and the led of them (are) swallowed up. 17. Therefore the Lord will not rejoice over their young men, and on their orphans and their widows He will not have mercy, for every one of them is profane and an evil-doer, and every mouth

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this word, they are a people for whom no morning dawns. 21. And it goes about therein hardly pressed and hungry: and it comes to pass, when hunger befals it, it frets itself, and curses by its king and by its God, and turns its face upward, 22, and looks to the earth, and behold distress and darkness, benighting with anguish, and thrust out into darkness.

IX.—1. For it does not remain dark where there is now distress: in the first time He brought into disgrace the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and in the last He brings to honour the road by the sea, the other side of Jordan, the circle of the Gentiles.

2. The people that walk about in darkness see a great light; they who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light shines. 3. Thou multipliest the nation, preparest it great joy; they rejoice before Thee like the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they share the spoil. 4. For the yoke of its burden and the stick of its neck, the stick of its oppressor, Thou hast broken to splinters, as in the day of Midian. 5. For every boot of those who tramp with boots in the tumult of battle, and cloak rolled in blood, shall be for burning, a food of fire. 6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government rests upon His shoulder: and they call His name Wonder, Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7. To the increase of government and to peace without end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to strengthen it, and to support it through judgment and righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The jealousy of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

B.—Jehovah's outstretched hand.—
CHAP. IX. 8–X. 4.

8. The Lord sends out a word against Jacob, and it descends into Israel. 9. And all the people must make atonement, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, saying in pride and haughtiness of heart, 10, "Bricks are fallen down, and we build with square stones; sycamores are hewn down, and we put cedars in their place." 11. Jehovah raises Rezin's oppressors high above him; and pricks up his enemies: 12, Aram from the east, and Philistines from the west; they devour Israel with full mouth. For all this His anger is not turned away, and His hand is stretched out still.

13. But the people turneth not unto Him that smiteth it, and they seek not Jehovah of hosts. 14. Therefore Jehovah rooteth out of Israel head and tail, palm-branch and rush, in one day. 15. Elders and highly distinguished men, this is the head; and prophets, lying teachers, this is the tail. 16. The leaders of this people have become leaders astray, and their followers swallowed up. 17. Therefore the Lord will not rejoice in their young men, and will have no compassion on their orphans and widows: for all together are profligate

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(is) speaking folly. For all this His wrath is not turned back, and still is His hand outstretched.

18. For wickedness burneth as the fire, thorns and briers it consumes, then kindles in the thickets of the forest, and they roll themselves upward, a column of smoke. 19. In the wrath of Jehovah of hosts the land is darkened, and the people is like food of fire: one another they do not spare. 20. And he tears on the right hand, and is hungry (still), and devours on the left, and (still) they are not satisfied; each the flesh of his (own) arm they devour: 21, Manasseh Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, (and) together they (are) against Judah. For all this His wrath is not turned back, and still His hand (is) stretched out.

X.—1. Woe unto them that decree decrees of injustice, and that write oppression which they have prescribed; 2, to turn aside from judgment the weak, the right of the poor of my people, that widows may be their spoil, and the fatherless they plunder. 3. And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the ruin (which) shall come from far? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your glory? 4. It does not bow beneath the prisoners, and (yet) they shall fall beneath the slain. For all this His wrath is not turned back, and still His hand is stretched out.

THE SIN AND THE DOOM OF ASSYRIA.
CHAP. X. 5–34.

5. Woe unto Asshur, the rod of my anger, and the staff in their hand is my indignation. 6. Against an impious nation will I send him, and against the people of my wrath I will commission him, to take spoil and to seize prey, and to render it a trampling, like the mire of streets. 7. And he not so will think, and his heart not so will think; for to destroy (is) in his heart, and to cut off nations not a few. 8. For he says, Are not my princes altogether kings? 9. Is not Calno like Carchemish? or (is) not Hamath like Arpad? or (is) not Samaria like Damascus? 10. As my hand hath found the idol-kingdoms, and their images (more) than (those of) Jerusalem and Samaria, 11, shall I not, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her gods?

12. And it shall be that the Lord will cut all his work short at mount Zion and at Jerusalem. (Yea, even there) will I visit on the fruit of the greatness of heart of the king of Assyria, and on the ostentation of his loftiness of eyes. 13. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done (all this), and by my wisdom, for I am wise, and I remove the bounds of the nations, and rob their hoards, and bring down, like a mighty man (as I am), the inhabitants. 14. My hand has found the strength of the nations, and like the gathering of eggs forsaken, so have I gathered all the earth, and there was none

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and evil-doers, and every mouth speaketh blasphemy. With all this His anger is not turned away, and His hand is stretched out still.

18. For the wickedness burneth up like fire: it devours thorns and thistles, and burns in the thickets of the wood; and they smoke upwards in a lofty volume of smoke. 19. Through the wrath of Jehovah of hosts the land is turned into coal, and the nation has become like the food of fire: not one spares his brother. 20. They hew on the right, and are hungry; and devour on the left, and are not satisfied: they devour the flesh of their own arm: 21, Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: these together over Judah. With all this His anger is not turned away, and His hand is stretched out still.

X.—1. Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers who prepare trouble; 2, to force away the needy from demanding justice, and to rob the suffering of my people of their rightful claims, that widows may become their prey, and they plunder orphans! 3. And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the storm that cometh from afar? To whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye deposit your glory? 4. There is nothing left but to bow down under prisoners, and they fall under the slain. With all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

C.—Destruction of the imperial kingdom of the world, and rise of the kingdom of Jehovah in His Anointed.—CHAP. X. 5–XII.

5. Woe to Asshur, the rod of mine anger, and it is a staff in their hand, mine indignation. 6. Against a wicked nation will I send them, and against the people of my wrath give them a charge, to spoil spoil, and to make prey, to make it trodden down like street-mire. 7. Nevertheless he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; for it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. 8. For he saith, Are not my generals all kings? 9. Is not Calno as Carchemish, or Hamath as Arpad, or Samaria as Damascus? 10. As my hand hath reached the kingdoms of the idols, and their graven images were more than those of Jerusalem and Samaria; 11, shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, do likewise to Jerusalem and her idols?

12. And it will come to pass, when the Lord shall have brought to an end all His work upon mount Zion and upon Jerusalem, I will come to punish over the fruit of the pride of heart of the king of Asshur, and over the haughty look of his eyes. 13. For he hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my own wisdom; for I am prudent: and I removed the bounds of the nations, and I plundered their stores, and threw down rulers like a bull. 14. And my hand extracted the wealth of the nations like a nest: and as men sweep up forsaken eggs, have I swept the whole earth; there was none that

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that moved a wing, or opened a mouth, or chirped.

15. Shall the axe glorify itself above the (person) hewing with it? Or shall the saw magnify itself above the (person) handling it? (This is indeed) like a rod's wielding those who wield it, like a staff's lifting (that which is) no wood. 16. Therefore the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will send upon his fat ones leanness, and under his glory shall burn like the burning of fire. 17. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame, and it shall burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day. 18. And the glory of his forest and his fruitful field, from soul to body, will He consume, and it shall be like the wasting away of a sick man. 19. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, and a child shall write them.

20. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and the escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no longer continue to lean upon their smiter, but shall lean upon Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21. A remnant shall return, a remnant of Jacob to God Almighty. 22. For though thy people, O Israel, shall be like the sand of the sea, (only) a remnant of them shall return. A consumption is decreed, overflowing (with) righteousness. 23. For a consumption even (the one) determined, (is) the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, making in the midst of all the earth.

24. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah of hosts, Be not afraid, O my people inhabiting Zion, of Asshur. He shall smite thee with the rod, and shall lift up his staff upon thee in the way of Egypt. 25. For yet a very little, and wrath is at an end, and my anger (shall go forth) to their destruction; 26, and Jehovah of hosts shall raise up against him a scourge like the smiting of Midian at the rock Oreb, and His rod (shall again) be over the sea, and He shall lift it up in the way of Egypt. 27. And it shall be in that day, (that) his burden shall depart from thy shoulder, and his yoke from thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of oil.

28. He is come to Aiath—he is passed to Migron—to Michmash he entrusts his baggage. 29. They have passed the pass—in Geba they have taken up their lodging—Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul flees. 30. Cry aloud, daughter Gallim; hearken Laishah, (ah) poor Anathoth! 31. Madmenah, wanders; the inhabitants of Gebim flee. 32. Yet to-day in Nob (he is) to stand; (and there) will he shake his hand against the mountain of the house of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

33. Behold, the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, (is) lopping the branch with terror, and the trees (shall be) felled, and the lofty ones brought low. 34. And He shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and this Lebanon by a mighty one shall fall.

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moved the wing, and opened the mouth, and chirped.

15. Dare the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith, or the saw magnify itself against him that useth it? As if a staff were to swing those that lift it up, as if a stick should lift up not—wood! 16. Therefore will the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send consumption against his fat men; and under Asshur's glory there burns a brand like a firebrand. 17. And the light of Israel becomes a fire, and His Holy One a flame; and it sets on fire and devours its thistles and thorns in one day. 18. And the glory of his forest and his garden-ground will He destroy, even to soul and flesh, so that it is as when a sick man dieth. 19. And the remnant of the trees of his forest can be numbered, and a boy could write them.

20. And it will come to pass in that day, the remnant of Israel, and that which has escaped of the house of Jacob, will not continue to stay itself upon its chastiser, and will stay itself upon Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21. The remnant will turn, the remnant of Jacob, to God the mighty. 22. For if thy people were even as the sea-sand, the remnant thereof will turn: destruction is firmly determined, flowing away righteousness. 23. For the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, completes the finishing-stroke and that which is firmly determined, within the whole land.

24. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, My people that dwellest on Zion, be not afraid of Asshur, if it shall smite thee with the rod, and lift up its stick against thee, in the manner of Egypt. 25. For yet a very little while the indignation is past, and my wrath turns to destroy them: 26, and Jehovah of hosts moves the whip over it, as He smote Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff stretches out over the sea, and He lifts it up in the manner of Egypt. 27. And it will come to pass in that day, its burden will remove from thy shoulder, and its yoke from thy neck; and the yoke will be destroyed from the pressure of the fat.

28. He comes upon Ayyath, passes through Migron; in Michmash he leaves his baggage. 29. They go through the pass: let Geba be our quarters for the night! Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul flees. 30. Scream aloud, O daughter of Gallim. Only listen, O Laysha! Poor Anathoth! 31. Madmenah hurries away; the inhabitants of Gebim rescue. 32. He still halts in Nob to-day; swings his hand over the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

33. Behold, the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, lops down the branches with terrific force; and those of towering growth are hewn down, and the lofty are humbled. 34. And He fells the thickets of the forest with iron; and Lebanon, it falls by a Majestic One.

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THE RESTORATION AND DELIVERANCE, ETERNAL SAFETY AND INTERNAL PEACE OF GOD'S OWN PEOPLE.—CHAPS. XI., XII.

XI.—1. And there shall come forth a twig from the stock of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots shall grow. 2. And upon Him shall rest the Spirit of Jehovah, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. 3. And His sense of smelling (shall be exercised) in the fear of Jehovah, and not by the sight of His eyes shall He judge, and not by the hearing of His ears shall He decide; 4, and He shall judge in righteousness the weak, and do justice with equity to the meek of the earth; and shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall slay the wicked. 5. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins.

6. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and young lion and fatling together, and a little child shall lead them; 7, and the cow and the bear shall feed, together shall their young lie down, and the lion like the ox shall eat straw; 8, and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and on the den of the basilisk shall the weaned child stretch its hand. 9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, because the land is full of the knowledge of Jehovah, like the waters covering the sea.

10. And in that day shall the root of Jesse which is set up be for a signal to the nations: unto Him shall the Gentiles seek, and His rest shall be glorious.

11. And it shall come to pass in that day, the Lord shall add His hand a second time to redeem the remnants of His people from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12. And He shall set up a signal to the nations, and shall gather the outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah shall He bring together from the four wings of the earth. 13. And the army of Ephraim shall depart, and the enemies of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. 14. And they shall fly upon the shoulder of the Philistines towards the sea; together they shall spoil the sons of the East; Edom and Moab the stretching out of their hand, and the children of Ammon their obedience. 15. And Jehovah will destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt, and He will wave His hand over the river, in the violence of His wind, and smite it into seven streams, and make (His people) tread (it) in shoes. 16. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of His people which shall be left, from Assyria, as there was for Israel in the day of his coming up from the land of Egypt.

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XI.—1. And there cometh forth a twig out of the stump of Jesse, and a shoot from its roots bringeth forth fruit. 2. And the Spirit of Jehovah descends upon Him, spirit of wisdom and understanding, spirit of counsel and might, spirit of knowledge and fear of Jehovah; 3, and fear of Jehovah is fragrance to Him; and He judges not according to outward sight, neither does He pass sentence according to outward hearing; 4, and judges the poor with righteousness, and passes sentence with equity for the humble in the land; and smites the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He slays the wicked. 5. And righteousness is the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His hips.

6. And the wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard lies down with the kid; and calf and lion and stalled ox together: a little boy drives them. 7. And cow and bear go to the pasture; their young ones lie down together: and the lion eats chopped straw like the ox. 8. And the suckling plays by the hole of the adder, and the weaned child stretches its hand to the pupil of the basilisk-viper. 9. They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain: for the land is filled with knowledge of Jehovah, like the waters covering the sea.

10. And it will come to pass in that day: the root-sprout of Jesse, which stands as a banner of the people's, for it will nations ask, and its place of rest is glory.

11. And it will come to pass in that day, the Lord will stretch out His hand a second time to redeem the remnant of His people that shall be left, out of Asshur, and out of Egypt, and out of Pathros, and out of Ethiopia, and out of Elam, and out of Shinar, and out of Hamath, and out of the islands of the sea. 12. And He raises a banner for the nations, and fetches home the outcasts of Israel; and the dispersed of Judah will He assemble from the four borders of the earth. 13. And the jealousy of Ephraim is removed, and the adversaries of Judah are cut off; Ephraim will not show jealousy towards Judah, and Judah will not oppose Ephraim. 14. And they fly upon the shoulder of the Philistines seawards; unitedly they plunder the sons of the East: they seize upon Edom and Moab, and the sons of Ammon are subject to them. 15. And Jehovah pronounces the ban upon the sea-tongue of Egypt, and swings His hand over the Euphrates in the glow of His breath, and smites it into seven brooks, and makes it so that men go through in shoes. 16. And there will be a road for the remnant of His people that shall be left, out of Asshur, as it was for Israel in the day of its departure out of the land of Egypt.

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XII.—1, 2. And thou shalt say in that day, O Lord, I will praise Thee! For Thou wast angry with me, but Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid; for my strength and song is Jah Jehovah, and He is become my salvation. 3. And ye shall draw water with joy from the springs of salvation. 4—6. And ye shall say in that day, Praise Jehovah! Call upon His name! Make known among the nations His exploits; remind them that His name is exalted. Praise Jehovah, because He has done a sublime deed. Known is this in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel.

PROPHECIES AGAINST CERTAIN FOREIGN POWERS. —CHAPS. XIII.–XXIII.

The fall of the Babylonian empire, and the destruction of Babylon.—CHAPS. XIII., XIV.

XIII.—1. The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw.

2. Upon a bare hill, set up a signal, raise the voice to them, wave the hand, and let them enter the gates of the nobles. 3. I (myself) have given command to my consecrated. Yes, I have called (forth) my mighty ones for (the execution of) my wrath, my proud exulters. 4. The voice of a multitude in the mountains! the likeness of much people! the sound of a tumult of kingdoms of nations gathered! Jehovah of hosts mustering a host of battle! 5. Coming from a distant land, from the end of the heavens, Jehovah and the instruments of His wrath, to lay waste the whole land. 6. Howl, for the day of Jehovah is near! like might from the Almighty it shall come. 7. Therefore all hands shall sink, and every heart of man shall melt. 8. And they shall be confounded, pangs and throes shall seize (them), like the travailing (woman) they shall writhe, each at his neighbour, they shall wonder, faces of flames their faces. 9. Behold the day of Jehovah cometh, terrible, and wrath and heat of anger, to make the land a waste, and its survivors He will destroy from it.

10. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations shall not shed their light, the sun is darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine. 11. And I will visit upon the world (its) iniquity, and upon the wicked their iniquity, and I will cause to cease the arrogance of presumptuous sinners, and the pride of tyrants I will humble. 12. And I will make man more scarce than pure gold, and a human being than the ore of Ophir. 13. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth shall shake out of its place in the wrath of Jehovah of hosts and in the day of the heat of His anger. 14. And it shall be that like a roe chased, and like sheep with none to gather them—each to his people, they shall turn—and each to his country they shall flee. 15.

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XII.—1, 2. And in that day thou wilt say, I thank Thee, O Jehovah, that Thou wast angry with me: | Thine anger is turned away, and Thou hast comforted me. | Behold, the God of my salvation; | I trust, and am not afraid: | for Jah Jehovah is my pride and song, | and He became my salvation. 3. And with rapture ye will draw water out of the wells of salvation. 4–6. And ye will say in that day, Praise Jehovah, proclaim His name, | make known His doings among the nations, | boast that His name is exalted. | Harp to Jehovah; for He has displayed majesty: | let this be known in all lands. | Shout and be jubilant, O inhabitant of Zion: | for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

PART III.

COLLECTION OF ORACLES CONCERNING THE HEATHEN.—CHAPS. XIII.–XXIII.

Oracle concerning the Chaldeans, the heirs of the Assyrians.—CHAP. XIII. 1–XIV. 17.

XIII.—1. Oracle concerning Babel, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.

2. On woodless mountain lift ye up a banner, call to them with a loud sounding voice, shake the hand, that they may enter into the gates of princes! 3. I, I have summoned my sanctified ones, also called my heroes to my wrath, my proudly rejoicing ones. 4. Hark, a rumbling on the mountains after the manner of a great people! hark, a rumbling of kingdoms met together! Jehovah of hosts musters an army, 5, those that have come out of a distant land, from the end of heaven: Jehovah and His instruments of wrath, to destroy the whole earth. 6. Howl; for the day of Jehovah is near; like a destructive force from the Almighty it comes. 7. Therefore all arms hang loosely down, and every human heart melts away. 8. And they are troubled: they fall into cramps and pangs; like a woman in labour they twist themselves: one stares at the other; their faces are faces of flame. 9. Behold, the day of Jehovah cometh, a cruel one, and wrath and fierce anger, to turn the earth into a wilderness: and its sinners He destroys out of it.

10. For the stars of heaven, and its Orions, will not let their light shine: the sun darkens itself at its rising, and the moon does not let its light shine. 11. And I visit the evil upon the world, and upon sinners their guilt, and sink into silence the pomp of the proud; and the boasting of tyrants I throw to the ground. 12. I make men more precious than fine gold, and people than a jewel of Ophir. 13. Therefore I shake the heavens, and the earth trembles away from its place, because of the wrath of Jehovah of hosts, and because of the day of His fierce anger. 14. And it comes to pass as with a gazelle which is scared, and as a flock without gatherers: they turn every one to his people, and they flee every one to his land. 15. Every one that is found is

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Every one found shall be stabbed, and every one joined shall fall by the sword. 16. And their children shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses shall be plundered, and their wives ravished. 17. Behold, I (am) stirring up the Madai who will not regard silver, and (as for) gold they will not take pleasure in it. 18. And bows shall dash boys in pieces, and the fruit of the womb they shall not pity; on children their eye shall not have mercy.

19. And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the ornament, the pride of the Chaldees, shall be like God's overthrowing Sodom and Gomorrah. 20. It shall not be inhabited for ever, and it shall not be dwelt in from generation to generation, neither shall the Arab pitch tent there, neither shall shepherds cause their flocks to lie there. 21. But there shall lie down desert creatures, and their houses shall be filled with howls (or yells), and there shall dwell the daughters of the ostrich, and shaggy beasts shall gambol there. 22. And wolves shall howl in his palaces, and jackals in the temples of pleasure. And near to come is her time, and her days shall not be prolonged.

XIV.—1. For Jehovah will pity Jacob, and will still choose Israel and cause them to rest on their (own) land, and the stranger shall be joined to them, and they shall be attached to the house of Jacob. 2. And nations shall take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel shall take possession of them on Jehovah's land for male and female servants—and (thus) they shall be captors of their captors, and rule over their oppressors. 3. And it shall be in the day of Jehovah's causing thee to rest from thy toil, and from thy commotion, and from the hard service which was wrought by thee, 4, that thou shalt raise this song over the king of Babylon, and say—

How hath the oppressor ceased, and the golden (city) ceased! 5. Jehovah hath broken the staff of the wicked, the rod of the rulers, 6, smiting nations in anger by a stroke without cessation, ruling nations in wrath by a rule without restraint. 7. At rest, quiet, is the whole earth. They burst forth into singing. 8. Also the cypresses rejoice with respect to thee, the cedars of Lebanon (saying), Now that thou art fallen, the feller shall not come up against us.

9. Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; it rouses for thee the giants, all the chief ones of the earth; it raises from their thrones all the kings of the nations. 10. All of them shall answer and say to thee, Thou also art made weak as we, to us are likened! 11. Down to the grave is brought thy pride, the music of thy harps: under thee is spread the worm, thy covering is vermin. 12. How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning! felled to the ground, thou that didst lord it over the nations! 13. And (yet) thou hadst said in thy heart, The heavens will I

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pierced through, and every one that is caught falls by the sword. 16. And their infants are dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses plundered, and their wives ravished. 17. Behold, I rouse up the Medes over them, who do not regard silver, and take no pleasure in gold. 18. And bows dash down young men; and they have no compassion on the fruit of the womb: their eye has no pity on children.

19. And Babel, the ornament of kingdoms, the proud boast of the Chaldeans, becomes like Elohim's overthrowing judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. 20. She remains uninhabited for ever, and unoccupied into generation of generations; and not an Arab pitches his tent there, and shepherds do not make their folds there. 21. And there lie beasts of the desert, and horn-owls fill their houses; and ostriches dwell there, and field-devils hop about there. 22. And jackals howl in her castles, and wild dogs in palaces of pleasure; and her time is near to come, and her days will not be prolonged.

XIV.—1. For Jehovah will have mercy on Jacob, and will once more choose Israel, and will settle them down in their own land: and the foreigner will associate with them, and they will cleave to the house of Jacob. 2. And nations take them, and accompany them to their place; and the house of Israel takes them to itself in the land of Jehovah for servants and maid-servants: and they hold in captivity those who let them away captive; and become lords over their oppressors. 3. And it cometh to pass, on the day that Jehovah giveth thee rest from thy plague, and from thy cares, and from the heavy bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, 4, that thou shalt raise such a song of triumph concerning the king of Babel, and say—

How hath the oppressor ceased! the place of torture ceased! 5. Jehovah hath broken the rod of the wicked, the ruler's staff, 6, which smote nations in wrath with strokes without ceasing, subjugated nations wrathfully with hunting that never stays. 7. The whole earth rests, is quiet: they break forth into singing. 8. Even the cypresses rejoice at thee, the cedars of Lebanon: "Since thou hast gone to sleep, no one will come up to lay axe upon us."

9. The kingdom of the dead below is all in uproar on account of thee, to meet thy coming; it stirs up the shades for thee, all the he-goats of the earth; it raiseth up from their throne-seats all the kings of the nations. 10. They all rise up and say to thee, Art thou also made weak like us? Art thou become like us? 11. Thy pomp is cast down to the region of the dead, the noise of the harps: maggots are spread under thee, and they that cover thee are worms. 12. How art thou fallen from the sky, thou star of light, son of the dawn, hurled down to the earth, thou that didst throw down nations from above! 13. And thou, thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend

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mount; above the stars of God will I raise my throne; and I will sit in the mount of meeting, in the sides of the north; 14, I will mount above the cloud-heights; I will make myself like the Most High. 15. But thou shalt only be brought down to hell, to the depths of the pit. 16. Those seeing thee shall gaze at thee, they shall look at thee attentively, (and say), Is this the man that made the earth shake, that made kingdoms tremble, 17, made a world like a desert, destroyed its cities, and its captives did not set free homewards? 18. All kings of nations, all of them, lie in state, each in his house; 19, and thou art cast out from thy grave—like a despised branch, the raiment of the slain, pierced with the sword, going down to the stones of the pit, like a trampled carcass. 20. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thy land thou hast destroyed, thy people thou hast slain. Let the seed of evil-doers be named no more for ever.

21. Prepare for his sons a slaughter, for the iniquity of their fathers. Let them not arise and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities. 22. And I (myself) will rise up against them, saith Jehovah of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon name, and remnant, and progeny, and offspring, saith Jehovah. 23. And I will render it a possession of the porcupine, and pools of water, and will sweep it with the broom of destruction.

24. Jehovah of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have planned, it has come to pass, and as I have devised it shall stand; 25, to break Assyria in my land, and on my mountains I will trample him; and his yoke shall depart from off them, and his burden from off his back shall depart. 26. This is the purpose that is purposed upon all the earth, and this the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. 27. For Jehovah of hosts hath purposed, and who shall annul? And His hand the one stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

28. In the year of the death of King Ahaz, was this burden.

29. Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken, for out of the root of the serpent shall come forth a basilisk, and its fruit a fiery flying serpent. 30. And the first-born of the poor shall feed, and the needy in security lie down, and I will kill thy root with famine, and thy remnant it shall slay.

31. Howl, O gate! cry, O city! dissolved, O Philistia, is the whole of thee; for out of the north a smoke comes, and there is no straggler in his forces. 32. And what shall one answer to the ambassadors of a nation? That Jehovah has founded Zion, and in it the afflicted of His people shall seek refuge.

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unto heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and sit down on the mount of the assembly of gods in the corner of the earth; 14, I will ascend to the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High 15. Nevertheless, thou wilt be cast down into the region of the dead, into the corner of the pit. 16. They that see thee look, considering thee, look at thee thoughtfully: "Is this the man that set the earth trembling, and kingdoms shaking, 17, that made the world a wilderness, and destroyed its cities, and did not release its prisoners (to their) home?

18. All the kings of the nations, they are all interred in honour, every one in his house: 19, but thou art cast away far from thy sepulchre like a shoot hurled away, clothed with slain, with those pierced through with the sword, those that go down to the stones of the pit; like a carcass trodden under feet. 20. Thou art not united with them in burial, for thou hast destroyed thy land, murdered thy people.

The seed of evil-doers will not be named for ever. 21. Prepare a slaughter-house for his sons, because of the iniquity of their fathers! They shall not rise and conquer lands, and fill the face of the earth with cities.

22. And I will rise up against them, saith Jehovah of hosts, and root out in Babel name and remnant, sprout and shoot, saith Jehovah. 23. And I will make it the possession of hedgehogs and marshes of water, and sweep it away with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of hosts.

24. Jehovah of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, that takes place; 25, to break Asshur to pieces in my land, and upon my mountain will I tread him under foot; then his yoke departs from them, and his burden will depart from their neck. 26. This is the purpose that is purposed over the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out over all nations. 27. For Jehovah of hosts hath purposed, and who could bring it to nought? And His hand that is stretched out, who can turn it back?

THE ORACLE CONCERNING PHILISTIA.—CHAP. XIV. 28–32.

28. In the year of the death of king Ahaz the following oracle was uttered.

29. Rejoice not so fully, O Philistia, that the rod which smote thee is broken to pieces; for out of the serpent's root comes forth a basilisk, and its fruit is a flying dragon. 30. And the poorest of the poor will feed, and needy ones lie down in peace; and I kill thy root through hunger, and he slays thy remnant.

31. Howl, O gate! cry, O city! O Philistia, thou must melt entirely away; for from the north cometh smoke, and there is no isolated one among his hosts. 32. And what answer do the messengers of the nations bring? That Jehovah hath founded Zion, and that the afflicted of His people are hidden therein.

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THE DOWNFALL OF MOAB.—CHAPS. XV., XVI.

1. (This is) the burden of Moab, That in a night Ar-Moab is laid waste, is destroyed; that in a night Kir-Moab is laid waste, is destroyed. 2. They go up to the house, and Dibon (to) the high places for weeping. On Nebo and on Medeba Moab howls, on all heads baldness, every beard cut off. 3. In its streets, they are girded with sackcloth; on its roofs and in its squares all of it howls, coming down with weeping. 4. And Heshbon cries and Elealeh—even to Jahaz is their voice heard; therefore the warriors of Moab cry, his soul is distressed in him. 5. My heart for Moab cries out; her fugitives (are fled) as far as Zoar—an heifer of three years old; for he that goes up Luhith with weeping goes up by it, for in the way of Horonaim a cry of destruction they lift up. 6. For the waters of Nimrim (are and) shall be desolations: for withered is the grass, gone is the herbage, verdure there is none. 7. Therefore the remainder of what each one has made, (and their) hoard, over the brook of the willows they carry them away. 8. For the cry goes round the border of Moab; even to Eglaim (is) its howling (heard), and to Beer-Elim its howling. 9. For the waters of Dimon are full of blood; for I will bring upon Dimon additions, on the escaped of Moab a lion; and on the remnant of it.

XVI.—1. Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, to the mountain of the daughter of Zion. 2. And it shall come to pass like a bird wandering, (like) a nest cast out, shall be the daughters of Moab, the fords of Arnon. 3. [Alexander omits the *translation* of this verse, but comments on it. . . .] 4. Let my outcasts, Moab, sojourn with thee; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, oppression has ceased, consumed are the tramplers out of the land. 5. And a throne shall be established in mercy; and one shall sit upon it in truth in the tent of David, judging and seeking justice, and prompt in equity.

6. We have heard of the pride of Moab, the very proud, his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath, the falsehood of his pretensions. 7. Therefore Moab shall howl for Moab; all of it shall howl; for the grapes of Kir-hareseth shall ye sigh, altogether smitten. 8. For the fields of Heshbon are withered—the vine of Sibmah—the lords of the nations broke down its choice plants—unto Jazer they reached—they strayed into the desert—its branches—they were stretched out—they reached to the sea. 9. Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer (for) the vine of Sibmah. I will wet thee (with) my tears, Heshbon and (thee) Elealeh! for upon thy fruit and thy harvest a cry has fallen. 10. And taken away is joy and gladness from the fruitful field: and in the vineyards shall no

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THE ORACLE CONCERNING MOAB.—CHAPS. XV., XVI.

XV.—1. Oracle concerning Moab! for in a night 'Ar-Moab is laid waste, destroyed; for in a night Kir-Moab is laid waste, destroyed. 2. They go up to the temple-house and Dibon, up to the heights to weep: upon Nebo and upon Medebah of Moab there is weeping: on all heads baldness, every beard is mutilated. 3. In the markets of Moab they gird themselves with sackcloth; on the roofs of the land, and in its streets, everything wails, melting into tears. Heshbon cries, and 'Elâle; even to Jahas they hear their howling; even the armed men of Moab break out into mourning thereat; its soul trembles within it. 5. My heart, towards Moab it crieth out; its bolts reach to Zoar, the three-year-old heifer. For the mountain-slope of Luhith they ascend with weeping; for on the road to Horonaijim they lift up a cry of despair. 6. For the waters of Nimrim are waste places from this time forth: for the grass is dried up, the vegetation wasteth away, the green is gone. 7. Therefore what has been spared, what has been gained, and their provision, they carry it over the willow-brook. 8. For the scream has gone round in the territory of Moab; the wailing of Moab resounds to Eglayim, and his wailing to Beër-Elim. 9. For the waters of Dimon are full of blood: for I suspend over Dimon a new calamity, over the escaped of Moab a lion, and over the remnant of the land.

XVI.—1. Send a land-ruler's tribute of lambs from Sela desert-wards to the mountain of the daughter of Zion. 2. And the daughters of Moab will be like birds fluttering about, a scared nest, at the fords of Arnon. 3. Give counsel, form a decision, make thy shadow like night in the midst of noon: hide the outcasts, do not betray the wanderers. 4. Let mine outcasts tarry in thee, Moab; be a covert to it from before the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, desolation has disappeared, treaders down are away from the land. 5. And a throne is established by grace, and there sits thereon in truth in the tent of David one judging, and zealous for right, and practised in righteousness.

6. We have heard of the pride of Moab, the very haughty (pride), his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath, the falsehood of his speech. 7. Therefore will Moab wail for Moab, everything will wail: for the grape-cakes of Kir-Haraseth will ye whine, utterly crushed. 8. For the fruit-fields of Heshbon have faded away: the vine of Sibmah, lords of the nations its branches smote down; they reached to Ja'zer, trailed through the desert: its branches spread themselves out wide, crossed over the sea. 9. Therefore I bemoan the vines of Sibmah with the weeping of Jazer; I flood thee with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh, that Hêdad hath fallen upon thy fruit-harvest and upon thy vintage. 10. And joy is taken away, and the rejoicing of the

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(more) be sung, no (more) be shouted; wine in the presses shall the treader not tread; the cry have I stilled. 11. Therefore my bowels for Moab like the harp shall sound, and my inwards for Kirhares. 12. And it shall come to pass, when Moab has appeared (before his gods), when he has wearied himself (with vain oblations) on the high place, then he shall enter into his sanctuary to pray, and shall not be able (to obtain an answer).

13. This is the word which Jehovah spake concerning Moab of old. 14. And now Jehovah speaks, saying, In three years, like the years of an hireling, the glory of Moab shall be disgraced, with all the great throng, and the remnant shall be small, and few, not much.

THE DOOM OF THE ENEMIES OF JUDAH.—CHAPS. XVII., XVIII.

XVII.—1. The burden of Damascus.

Behold, Damascus is removed from (being) a city, and is a heap, a ruin. 2. Forsaken are the cities of Aroer; for flocks shall they be, and they shall lie down, and there shall be no one making (them) afraid. 3. Then shall cease defence from Ephraim and royalty from Damascus and the rest of Syria. Like the glory of the children of Israel shall they be, saith Jehovah of hosts.

4. And it shall come to pass in that day, the glory of Jacob shall be brought low, and the fatness of his flesh shall be made lean. 5. And it shall be as one gathers the harvest, the standing corn, and his arm reaps the ears. And it shall be like one collecting ears in the valley of Rephaim. 6. And gleanings shall be left therein like the shaking of an olive-tree, two (or) three berries in the top of a high bough, four (or) five in the branches of the fruit-tree, saith Jehovah, God of Israel.

7. In that day man shall turn to his Maker, and his eyes to the Holy One of Israel shall look. 8. And he shall not turn to the altars, the work of his own hands, and that which his own fingers have made shall he not regard, and the groves of Ashtoreth and the pillars of the sun.

9. In that day shall his fortified cities be like what is left in the thickets and the lofty branch, which they leave (as they retire) from before the children of Israel, and (the land) shall be a waste. 10. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and the rock of thy strength hast not remembered, therefore thou wilt plant plants of pleasantness, and with a strange slip set it. 11. In the day of thy planting thou wilt hedge it in, and in the morning thou wilt make thy seed to blossom, (but) away flies the crop in a day of grief and desperate sorrow.

12. Hark! the noise of many nations! Like the noise of the sea they make a noise. And the rush of peoples! Like the rush of many waters they are rushing. 13. Nations, like the rush of many waters, rush; and he re-

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garden-land; and there is no exulting, no shouting in the vineyards: the treader treads out no wine in the presses; I put an end to the Hêdad. 11. Therefore my bowels sound for Moab like a harp, and my inside for Kir-Heres. 12. And it will come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary with weeping upon the mountain height, and enters into its sanctuary to pray, it will not gain anything.

13. This is the word which Jehovah spake long ago concerning Moab. And now Jehovah speaketh thus: In three years, like the years of a hireling, the glory of Moab is disgraced, together with all the multitude of the great: a remnant is left, contemptibly small, and not great at all.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING DAMASCUS AND ISRAEL.—CHAP. XVII.

1. The burden of Damascus.

Behold, Damascus must (be taken) away out of the number of the cities, and will be a heap of fallen ruins. 2. The cities of Aroer are forsaken, they are given up to flocks, they lie there without any one scaring them away. 3. And the fortress of Ephraim is abolished, and the kingdom of Damascus; and it happens to those that are left of Aram as to the glory of the sons of Israel, saith Jehovah of hosts.

4. And it comes to pass in that day, the glory of Jacob wastes away, and the fat of his flesh grows thin. 5. And it will be as when a reaper grasps the stalks of wheat, and his arm mows off the ears; and it will be as with one who gathers ears in the valley of Rephaim. 6. Yet a gleaning remains from it, as at the olive-beating: two, three berries high up at the top; four, five in its, the fruit-tree's, branches, saith Jehovah the God of Israel. 7. At that day will man look up to his Creator, and his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel. 8. And he will not look to the altars, the work of his hands; and what his fingers have made he will not regard, neither the Astartes nor the sun-gods.

9. In that day will his fortified cities be like the ruins of the forest and of the mountain top, which they cleared before the sons of Israel: and there arises a waste place. 10. For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not thought of the Rock of thy stronghold, therefore thou plantedst charming plantations, and didst set them with strange vines. 11. In the day that thou plantedst, thou didst make a fence; and with the morning dawn thou madest thy sowing to blossom: a harvest heap in the day of deep wounds and deadly sorrow of heart.

12. Woe to the roaring of many nations: like the roaring of seas they roar; and lo the rumbling of nations, like the rumbling of mighty waters they rumble! 13. Nations, like the rumbling of mighty waters they rumble; and He threatens it: then it flies

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bukes it, and it flees from afar, and is chased like the chaff of hills before a wind, and like a rolling thing before a whirlwind. 14. At evening-tide, and behold terror; before morning he is not. This be the portion of our plunderers, and the lot of our spoilers.

XVIII.—1. Ho! land of rustling wings, which art beyond the rivers of Cush, 2, sending by sea ambassadors, and in vessels of papyrus on the face of the waters. Go, ye light messengers, to a nation drawn and shorn, to a people terrible since it existed and onwards, a nation of double strength and tramplings, whose land the streams divide. 3. All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, shall see as it were the raising of a standard on the mountains, and shall hear as it were the blowing of a trumpet.

4. For thus said Jehovah to me, I will rest and look on in my dwelling-place, like a serene heat upon herbs, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. 5. For before the harvest or the bloom is finished, and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he cuts down the branches with the pruning-knives, and the tendrils he removes, he cuts away. 6. They shall be left together to the wild birds of the mountains, and to the wild beasts of the earth, and the wild birds shall summer thereon, and every wild beast of the earth thereon shall winter.

7. At that time shall be brought a gift to Jehovah of hosts, a people drawn out and shorn, and from a people terrible since it hath been and onward, a nation of double power and trampling, whose land streams divide, to the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, mount Zion.

THE BURDEN OF EGYPT.—CHAP. XIX.

1. Behold! Jehovah riding on a light cloud, and He comes to Egypt, and the idols of Egypt move at His presence, and the heart of Egypt melts within him. 2. And I will excite Egypt against Egypt, and they shall fight, a man with his brother, and a man with his fellow, city with city, kingdom with kingdom. 3. And the spirit of Egypt shall be emptied out in the midst thereof, and the counsel thereof I will swallow up, and they will seek to the idols, and to the mutterers, and to the familiar spirits, and to the wizards. 4. And I will shut up Egypt in the hands of a hard master, and a strong king shall rule over them, saith the Lord Jehovah of hosts.

5. And the waters shall be dried up from the sea, and the river shall fail and be dried up. 6. And the rivers shall stink, the streams of Egypt are emptied and dried up, reed and rush sicken. 7. The meadows by the river, by the mouth of the river, and all the sown ground of the river, shall wither, being driven away,

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far away, and is chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a cloud of dust before the gale. 14. At eventide, behold consternation; and before the morning dawn it is destroyed! this is the portion of our plunderers, and the lot of our robbers.

ETHIOPIA'S SUBMISSION TO JEHOVAH. —CHAP. XVIII.

1. Woe to the land of the whirring of wings, which is beyond the rivers of Cush; 2, that sends ambassadors into the sea, and in boats of papyrus over the face of the waters. Go, swift messengers, to the people stretched out and polished, to the terrible people far away on the other side, to the nation of command upon command and treading down, whose land rivers cut through. 3. All ye possessors of the globe and inhabitants of the earth, when a banner rises on the mountains, look ye; and when they blow the trumpets, hearken! 4. For thus hath Jehovah spoken to me: I will be still, and I will observe upon my throne during clear weather in sunshine, during a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. 5. For before the harvest, when the blossom falls off, and the fruit becomes the ripening grape: then will He cut off the branches with pruning-hooks; and the tendrils He removes, breaks off. 6. They are left altogether to the birds of prey on the mountains, and to the cattle of the land; and the birds of prey summer thereon, and all the cattle of the land winter thereon.

7. At that time will there be offered as a homage to Jehovah of hosts a nation stretched out and polished, and from a terrible people, far away on the other side; a nation of command upon command and treading down, whose land rivers cut through, at the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, the mountain of Zion.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING EGYPT.—CHAP. XIX.

1. Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a light cloud, and cometh to Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shake before Him, and the heart of Egypt melteth within it. 2. And I spur Egypt against Egypt: and they go to war, every one with his brother, and every one with his neighbour; city against city, kingdom against kingdom. 3. And the spirit of Egypt is emptied out within it: and I swallow up its ready counsel; and they go to the idols to inquire, and to the mutterers, and to the oracle-spirits, and to the soothsayers. 4. And I shut up Egypt in the hand of a hard rule; and a fierce king will rule over them, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.

5. And the waters will dry up from the sea, and the river is parched and dried. 6. And the arms of the river spread a stench; the channels of Matzor become shallow and parched: reed and rush shrivel up. 7. The meadow by the Nile, on the border of the Nile, and every cornfield of the Nile, dries

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and it is not. 8. And the fishermen shall mourn, and they shall lament, all the throwers of a hook into the river, and the spreaders of a net upon the surface of the water, languish. 9. And ashamed are the workers of combed flax, and the weavers of white (stuffs). 10. And her pillars are broken down, all labourers for hire are grieved at heart.

11. Entirely foolish are the princes of Zoan, the sages of the counsellors of Pharaoh, (their) counsel is become brutish. How can ye say to Pharaoh, I am the son of wise (fathers), I am the son of kings of old? 12. Where (are) they? Where (are) thy wise men? Pray let them tell thee, and (if that is too much) let them (at least) know, what Jehovah of hosts hath purposed concerning Egypt. 13. Infatuated are the chiefs of Zoan, deceived are the chiefs of Noph, and they have misled Egypt, the corner-stone of her tribes. 14. Jehovah hath mingled in the midst of her a spirit of confusion, and they have misled Egypt in all its work, like the misleading of a drunkard in his vomit. 15. And there shall not be in Egypt a work which head and tail, branch and rush, may do.

16. In that day shall Egypt be like women, and shall fear and tremble from before the shaking of the hand of Jehovah of hosts, which He is shaking over it. 17. And the land of Judah shall be for a terror unto Egypt, every person to whom one mentions it shall fear before the purpose of Jehovah of hosts, which He is purposing against it.

18. In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt speaking the language of Canaan, and swearing to Jehovah of hosts. The city of destruction shall one be called. 19. In that day there shall be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land, and a pillar near its border to Jehovah. 20. And it shall be for a sign and for a testimony to Jehovah of hosts in the land of Egypt, that they shall cry to Jehovah from the presence of oppressors, and He will send them a deliverer and a mighty one, and save them. 21. And Jehovah shall be known to Egypt, and Egypt shall know Jehovah in that day, and shall serve with sacrifice and offering, and shall vow a vow to Jehovah, and perform it.

22. And Jehovah shall smite Egypt, smiting and healing, and they shall return unto Jehovah, and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. 23. In that day there shall be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria shall come into Egypt and Egypt into Assyria, and Egypt shall serve with Assyria. 24. In that day shall Israel be a third with respect to Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25, which Jehovah has blessed, saying, Blessed be my people Egypt, and the work of my hands Assyria, and my heritage Israel.

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up, is scattered, and disappears. 8. And the fishermen groan, and all who throw draw-nets into the Nile lament, and they that spread out the net upon the face of the waters languish away. 9. And the workers of fine combed flax are confounded, and the weavers of cotton fabrics. 10. And the pillars of the land are ground to powder; all that work for wages are troubled in mind.

11. The princes of Zoan become mere fools, the wise counsellors of Pharaoh; readiness in counsel is stupefied. How can ye say to Pharaoh, I am a son of wise men, a son of kings of the olden time? 12. Where are they then, thy wise men? Let them announce to thee, and know what Jehovah of hosts hath determined concerning Egypt. 13. The princes of Zoan have become fools, the princes of Memphis are deceived; and they have led Egypt astray who are the corner-stone of its castes. 14. Jehovah hath poured a spirit of giddiness into the heart of Egypt, so that they have led Egypt astray in all its doing, as a drunken man wandereth about in his vomit. 15. And there does not occur of Egypt any work which worked, of head and tail, palm-branch and rush.

16. In that day will the Egyptians become like women, and tremble and be alarmed at the swinging of the hand of Jehovah of hosts, which He sets in motion against it. 17. And the land of Judah becomes a shuddering for Egypt; as often as they mention this against Egypt, it is alarmed, because of the decree of Jehovah of hosts, that He suspendeth over it.

18. In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt speaking the language of Canaan, and swearing to Jehovah of hosts: 'Ir ha-Heres will one be called. 19. In that day there stands an altar consecrated to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and an obelisk near the border of the land consecrated to Jehovah. 20. And a sign and a witness for Jehovah of hosts is this in the land of Egypt; when they cry to Jehovah for oppressors, He will send them a helper and champion, and deliver them. 21. And Jehovah makes Himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians know Jehovah in that day; and they serve Him with slain-offerings and meat-offerings, and vow vows to Jehovah, and pay them. 22. And Jehovah smites Egypt, smiting and healing; and if they return to Jehovah, He suffers Himself to be entreated, and heals them. 23. In that day a road will run from Egypt to Asshur, and Asshur comes into Egypt, and Egypt to Asshur; and Egypt worships (Jehovah) with Asshur. 24. In that day will Israel be a third part to Egypt and Asshur, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25, since Jehovah of hosts blesseth them thus: Blessed be thou, my people Egypt; and thou, Asshur, the work of my hands; and thou Israel, mine inheritance.

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THE DEFEAT AND CAPTIVITY OF THE EGYPTIANS AND ETHIOPIANS.—CHAP. XX.

1. In the year of Tartan's coming to Ashdod, in Sargon king of Assyria's sending him, and he fought with Ashdod and took it; 2, at that time spake Jehovah by the hand of Isaiah the son of Amos, saying, Go, and thou shalt loose the sackcloth from upon thy loins, and thy shoe thou shalt pull off from thy foot. And he did so, going naked and barefoot.

3. And Jehovah said, As my servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years a sign and symbol concerning Egypt and concerning Ethiopia, 4, so shall the king of Assyria lead the captivity of Egypt and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, the disgrace of Egypt.

5. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their boast. 6. And the inhabitant of this coast shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we fled for help, to be delivered from the presence of the king of Assyria! And how shall we (ourselves) escape?

THE BURDEN OF THE DESERT OF THE SEA.—CHAP. XXI. 1–10.

XXI.—1. Like whirlwinds in the south, as to rushing from the wilderness it comes, from a terrible land. 2. A hard vision it is revealed to me; the deceiver deceiving and the spoiler spoiling. Go up, O Elam! besiege, O Media! All sighing have I made to cease. 3. Therefore my loins are filled with pain; pangs have seized me like the pangs of a travailing woman; I writhe from hearing; I am shocked from seeing. 4. My heart wonders; horror appals me; the twilight of my pleasure He has put for fear for me.

5. Set the table, spread the cloth, eat, drink; arise, ye chiefs, anoint the shield! 6. For thus saith the Lord to me, Go, set the watchman: that which he sees let him tell. 7. And should he see cavalry—pairs of horsemen—ass-riders—camel-riders—then shall he hearken with hearkening a great harkening. 8. And he cries—a lion—on the watch-tower, Lord, I am standing always by day, and on my ward I am stationed all the night. 9. And behold, this comes, mounted men, pairs of horsemen. And he speaks again, and says, Fallen, fallen is Babylon, and all the images of her gods He has broken to the earth.

10. O my threshing, and the son of my threshing-floor! What I have heard from Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, I have told you.

THE BURDEN OF DUMAH.—CHAP. XXI. 11–13.

11. To me (one is) calling from Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman,

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SYMBOL OF THE FALL OF EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA, AND ITS INTERPRETATION.—CHAP. XX.

1. In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, Sargon the king of Asshur having sent him (and he made war against Ashdod, and captured it): 2, at that time Jehovah spake through Yesha'yahu, the son of Amos, as follows, Go and loosen the smock-frock from off thy loins, and take off thy shoes from thy feet. And he did so, and went stripped and barefooted.

3. And Jehovah said, As my servant Yesha'yahu goeth naked and barefooted, a sign and a type for three years long over Egypt and over Ethiopia, 4, so will the king of Asshur carry away the prisoners of Egypt and the exiles of Ethiopia, children and old men, naked and barefooted, and with their seat uncovered—a shame to Egypt.

5. And they cry together, and behold themselves deceived by Ethiopia, to which they looked, and by Egypt, in which they gloried. 6. And the inhabitant of this coast-land saith in that day, Behold, thus it happens to those to whom we looked, whither we fled for help to deliver us from the king of Asshur: and how should we, we escape?

THE ORACLE CONCERNING THE DESERT OF THE SEA (BABYLON).—CHAP. XXI. 1–10.

1. As storms in the south approach, it comes from the desert, from a terrible land. 2. Hard vision is made known to me: the spoiler spoils, and the devastator devastates. Go up, Elam! Surround, Moday! I put an end to all their sighing. 3. Therefore are my loins full of cramp: pangs have taken hold of me, as the pangs of a travailing woman: I twist myself, so that I do not hear; I am brought down with fear, so that I do not see. 4. My heart beats wildly; horror hath troubled me; the darkness of night that I love, He hath turned for me into quaking.

5. They cover the table, watch the watch, eat, drink. Rise up, ye princes! Anoint the shield! 6. For thus saith the Lord to me, Go, set a spy; what he seeth, let him declare. 7. And he saw a procession of cavalry, pairs of horsemen, a procession of asses, a procession of camels; and listened sharply, as sharply as he could listen. 8. Then he cried with a lion's voice, Upon the watch-tower, O Lord, I stand continually by day, and upon my watch I keep my stand all the nights. 9. And, behold, there came a cavalcade of men, pairs of horsemen, and lifted up its voice, and said, Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the images of its gods He hath dashed to the ground! 10. O thou my threshing, and child of my threshing-floor! What I have heard from Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, I have declared to you.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING THE SILENCE OF DEATH (EDOM).—CHAP. XXI. 11, 12.

11. A cry comes to me out of Seir: Watchman, how far is it in the night? Watchman,

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what of the night? 12. The watchman says, Morning comes and also night; if ye will inquire, inquire; return, come.

THE BURDEN OF ARABIA.—CHAP. XXI. 13–17.

13. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, oh ye caravans of Dedanim. 14. To meet the thirsty they bring water; with his bread they anticipate the fugitive. 15. Because from the presence of swords they fled, from the presence of a drawn sword and from the presence of a bended bow, and from the presence of a weight of war. 16. For thus saith the Lord to me, In yet a year, like the years of a hireling shall fail all the glory of Kedar. 17. And the remnant of the number of bows, the mighty men of the children of Kedar shall be few, for Jehovah God of Israel hath spoken it.

THE BURDEN OF THE VALLEY OF VISION. —CHAP. XXII. 1–14.

1. What (is) to thee, that thou art wholly gone up on the house-tops? 2. Full of stirs, a noisy town, a joyous city, thy slain are not slain with the sword nor dead in battle. 3. All thy chiefs fled together—from the bow—they were found—all that were found of thee were bound together—from afar they fled.

4. Therefore I said, Look away from me; let me weep bitterly; try not to comfort me for the desolation of the daughter of my people. 5. For there is a day of confusion and trampling and perplexity to the Lord Jehovah of hosts, in the valley of vision—breaking the wall and crying to the mountain. 6. And Elam bare a quiver, with chariots, infantry, horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield. 7. And it came to pass (that) the choice of thy valleys were full of chariots, and the horsemen drew up towards the gate. 8. And the covering of Judah was removed, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. 9. And the breaches of the city of David ye saw, that they were many, and ye gathered the waters of the lower pool. 10. And the houses of Jerusalem ye numbered, and ye pulled down the houses to repair the wall. 11. And a reservoir ye made between the two walls for the waters of the old pool, and ye did not look to the Maker of it, and the Former of it ye did not see. 12. And the Lord Jehovah of hosts called in that day to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding sackcloth; 13, and behold mirth and jollity, slaying of oxen and killing of sheep, eating of flesh and drinking of wine; eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. 14. And Jehovah of hosts made a revelation to me, saying, This iniquity shall certainly not be forgiven you until you die.

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how far in the night? 12. Watchman says, Morning cometh, and also night. Will ye inquire, inquire! Turn, come!

THE ORACLE IN THE EVENING (AGAINST ARABIA). —CHAP. XXI. 13–17.

13. In the wilderness in Arabia ye must pass the night, caravans of the Dedanians. 14. Bring water to meet thirsty ones! The inhabitants of the land of Tema are coming with its bread before the fugitive. 15. For they are flying before swords, before drawn swords, and before a bent bow, and before oppressive war.

16. For thus hath the Lord spoken to me, Within a year, as the years of a hired labourer, it is over with all the glory of Kedar. 17 And the remnant of the number of bows of the heroes of the Kedarenes will be small: for Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath spoken.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING THE VALLEY OF VISION (JERUSALEM).—CHAP. XXII. 1–14.

1. What aileth thee, then, that thou are wholly ascended upon the house-tops? 2. O full of tumult, thou noisy city, shouting castle, thy slain men are not slain with the sword, nor slaughtered in battle. 3. All thy rulers departing together are fettered without bow, all thy captured ones are fettered together, fleeing far away.

4. Therefore I say, Look away from me, that I may weep bitterly; press me not with consolations for the destruction of the daughter of my people! 5. For a day of noise, and of treading down, and of confusion, cometh from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, in the valley of vision, breaking down walls; and a cry of woe echoes against the mountains.

6. And Elam has taken the quiver, together with chariots with men, horsemen; and Kir has drawn out the shield. 7. And then it comes to pass, that thy choicest valleys are filled with chariots, and the horsemen plant a firm foot towards the gate.

8. Then he takes away the covering of Judah, and thou lookest in that day to the store of arms of the forest-house; 9, and ye see the breaches of the city of David, that there are many of them; and ye collect together the waters of the lower pool. 10. And ye number the houses of Jerusalem, and pull down the houses, to fortify the wall. 11. And ye make a basin between the two walls for the waters of the old pool; and ye do not look to Him who made it, neither do ye have regard to Him who fashioned it long ago.

12. The Lord, Jehovah of hosts, calls in that day to weeping, and to mourning, and to the pulling out of hair, and to girding with sackcloth; 13, and behold joy and gladness, slaughtering of oxen and killing of sheep, eating of flesh and drinking of wine, eating and drinking, for 'to-morrow we die.' 14. And Jehovah of hosts hath revealed in mine ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be expiated for you until ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.

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THE MESSAGE TO SHEBNA.—CHAP. XXII. 15–25.

15. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah of hosts, Go, go into this treasurer, to Shebna who (is) over the house. 16. What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewn thee here a sepulchre? Hewing on high his sepulchre, graving in the rock a habitation for himself! 17. Behold, Jehovah is casting thee a cast, O man! and covering thee a covering. 18. Rolling He will roll thee in a roll, like a ball (thrown) into a spacious ground—there thou shalt die—and there the chariots of thy glory—shame of thy master's house. 19. And I will thrust thee from thy post, and from thy station thou shalt be pulled down.

20. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call for my servant, for Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah; 21, and I will clothe him with thy dress, and with thy girdle will I strengthen him, and thy power will I give into his hand, and he shall be for a father to the dweller in Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 22. And I will put the key of the house of David on his shoulder; he shall open, and there shall be no one shutting; he shall shut, and there shall be no one opening. 23. And I will fasten him a nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a throne of glory to his father's house. 24. And they shall hang upon him all the honour of his father's house—the offspring and the issue—all vessels of small quantity—from vessels of cups even to all vessels of flagons. 25. In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall the nail fastened in a sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall, and the burden which was upon it shall be cut off, for Jehovah speaks.

THE BURDEN OF TYRE.—CHAP. XXIII.

1. Howl, ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, no house, no entrance; from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them. 2. Be silent, O inhabitants of the isle, the merchants of Sidon crossing the sea filled thee. 3. And in great waters (was) the seed of the Nile; the harvest of the river (was) her revenue; and she was a mart of nations. 5. When the report comes to Egypt, they are pained at the report of Tyre. 6. Pass over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. 7. Is this your joyous city? From the days of old is her antiquity; her feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

8. Who hath purposed this against Tyre the crowning (city), whose merchants (are) princes, her traffickers the honoured of the earth? 9. Jehovah of hosts hath purposed it, to profane the elevation of all beauty, to

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AGAINST SHEBNA THE STEWARD.—CHAP. XXII. 15–25.

(*Appendix to the Tetralogy in* CHAPS. XXI., XXII. 14.)

15. Thus spake the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, Go, get thee to that steward there, to Shebna the house-mayor. 16. What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou art hewing thyself out a sepulchre here, hewing out his sepulchre high up, digging himself a dwelling in rocks? 17. Behold, Jehovah hurleth thee, hurling with a man's throw, and graspeth thee grasping. 18. Coiling, He coileth thee a coil, a ball into a land far and wide, there shalt thou die, and thither the chariots of thy glory, thou shame of the house of thy lord! 19. And I thrust thee from thy post, and from thy standing-place He pulleth thee down

20. And it will come to pass in that day, that I call to my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, 21, and invest him with thy coat, and I throw thy sash firmly round him, and place thy government in his hand; and he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. 22. And I place the key of David upon his shoulder: and when he opens, no man shuts; and when he shuts, no man opens. 23. And I fasten him as a plug in a fast place, and he becomes the seat of honour to his father's house. 24. And the whole mass of his father's house hangs upon him, the offshoots and the side-shoots, every small vessel, from the vessel of the basins even to every vessel of the pitchers. 25. In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, will the peg that is fastened in a sure place be removed, and be cast down, and fall; and the burden that it bore falls to the ground: for Jehovah hath spoken.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING TYRE.—CHAP. XXIII.

(*Conclusion of the Cycle of Prophecies relating to the Heathen.*)

1. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entrance any more! Out of the land of the Chittæans it is made known to them. 2. Be alarmed, ye inhabitants of the coast! Sidonian merchants, sailing over the sea, filled thee once. 3. And the sowing of Sichor came upon great waters, the harvest of the Nile, her store; and she became gain for nations. 4. Shudder, O Sidon; for the sea speaketh, the fortress of the sea, thus: I have not travailed, nor given birth, nor trained up young men, brought up maidens. 5. When the report cometh to Egypt, they tremble at the report from Tzor.

6. Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the coast! 7. Is this your fate, thou full of rejoicing, whose origin is from the days of the olden time, whom her feet carried far away to settle? 8. Who hath determined such a thing concerning Tzor, the distributor of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traders are the chief men of the earth! 9. Jehovah of hosts hath deter-

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degrade all the honoured of the earth. 10. Pass through thy land like the river; daughter of Tarshish, there is no girdle (any) longer. 11. His hand He stretched out over the sea; He made kingdoms tremble; Jehovah commanded respecting Canaan to destroy her strongholds. 12. And He said, Thou shalt not continue to triumph, violated virgin daughter of Zidon; to Chittim arise, pass over; there also there shall be no rest to thee. 13. Behold the land of the Chaldees; this people was not; Assyria founded it for dwellers in the wilderness; they have set up his towers; they have roused up her palaces; He has rendered it a ruin. 14. Howl, ships of Tarshish, for destroyed is your stronghold.

15. And it shall come to pass in that day that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, as the days of one king; from the end of seventy years shall be to Tyre like the harlot's song.

16. Take a harp, go about the city, O forgotten harlot! play well, sing much, that thou mayest be remembered. 17. And it shall be at the end of seventy years, Jehovah will visit Tyre, and she shall return to her hire, and shall play the harlot with all the kingdoms of the earth upon the face of the ground.

18. And her gain and her hire shall be holiness to Jehovah; it shall not be stored and it shall not be hoarded; for her gain shall be for those who sit before Jehovah, to eat to satiety, and for substantial clothing.

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mined it, to desecrate the pomp of every kind of ornament, to dishonour the chief men of the earth, all of them.

10. Overflow thy land like the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish! No girdle restrains thee any longer. 11. His hand hath He stretched over the sea, thrown kingdoms into trembling; Jehovah hath given commandment concerning Kena'an to destroy her fortresses. 12. And He said, Thou shalt not rejoice any further, thou disgraced one, virgin daughter of Sidon. Go up to Kittim, go over; there also shalt thou not find rest. 13. Behold the Chaldean land: this people that has not been (Asshur—it hath prepared the same for desert beasts)—they set up their siege-towers, destroy the palaces of Kena'an, make it a heap of ruins. 14. Mourn, ye ships of Tarshish: for your fortress is laid waste.

15. And it will come to pass in that day, that Tzor will be forgotten seventy years, equal to the days of one king; after the end of seventy years Tzor will go, according to the song of the harlot. 16. Take the guitar, sweep through the city, O forgotten harlot! Play bravely, sing zealously, that thou mayest be remembered! 17. And it will come to pass at the end of the seventy years: Jehovah will visit Tzor, and she comes again to her hire, and commits prostitution with all the kingdoms of the earth on the broad surface of the globe. 18. And her gain and her reward of prostitution will be holy to Jehovah: it is not stored up nor gathered together; but her gain from commerce will be theirs who dwell before Jehovah, to eat to satiety and for stately clothing.

PROPHECIES HAVING REFERENCE CHIEFLY TO JUDAH.—CHAPS. XXIV.–XXXV.

COMING JUDGMENTS.—CHAPS. XXIV.–XXVII.

I.—*Some of the Consequences of National Iniquity.*—CHAP. XXIV. 1–12.

XXIV.—1. Behold Jehovah (is) pouring out the land and emptying it, and He will turn down its face, and He will scatter its inhabitants. 2. And it shall be, as the people so the priest, as the servant so his master, as the maid so her mistress, as the buyer so the seller, as the lender so the borrower, as the creditor so the debtor. 3. The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled, for Jehovah speaks this word. 4. The earth mourneth, fadeth; the world languisheth, fadeth; the highest of the people of the earth languish. 5. And the land has been profaned under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statute, broken the everlasting covenant. 6. Therefore a curse devoured the earth, and those dwelling in it were reckoned guilty. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth burned, and there are few men left. 7. The new wine mourneth; the vine languisheth; all the merry-hearted do

PART IV.

FINALE OF THE GREAT CATASTROPHE.—CHAPS. XXIV.–XXVII.

The Judgment upon the Earth.—CHAP. XXIV.

1. Behold, Jehovah emptieth the earth, and layeth it waste, and marreth its form, and scattereth its inhabitants. 2. And it happeneth, as to the people, so to the priest; as to the servant, so to his master; as to the maid, so to her mistress; as to the buyer, so to the seller; as to the lender, so to the borrower; as to the creditor, so to the debtor. 3. Emptying the earth is emptied, and plundering is plundered: for Jehovah hath spoken this word.

4. Smitten down, withered up is the earth; pined away, wasted is the world; pined away have they, the foremost of the people of the earth. 5. And the earth has become wicked among its inhabitants; for they transgressed revelations, set at naught the ordinance, broke the everlasting covenant. 6. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they who dwelt in it make expiation: therefore are the inhabitants of the earth withered up, and there are very few mortals left. 7. New wine mourneth, vine is parched, all the merry-

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sigh. 8. Still is the mirth of drums; ceased is the noise of revellers; still is the mirth of the harp. 9. With the song they shall not drink wine; bitter shall strong drink be to them that drink it. 10. Broken down is the city of confusion, shut up is every house so that it cannot be entered. 11. A cry for wine in the streets—darkened is all joy—departed is the gladness of the earth. 12. What is left in the city is desolation, and into ruins is the gate beaten down.

II.—*The Songs of the Scattered Remnant.*—VERS. 13–16.

13. For so shall it be in the midst of the earth among the nations, like the beating of an olive-tree, like gleanings when the gathering is done. 14. They shall raise their voice, they shall sing, for the majesty of Jehovah they cry aloud from the sea. 15. Therefore in the fires glorify Jehovah, in the islands of the sea the name of Jehovah God of Israel. 16. From the wing of the earth we have heard songs, praise to the righteous; and I said, Woe to me, woe to me, alas for me! The deceivers deceive, with deceit the deceivers deceive.

III.—*Jehovah's Exaltation in Jerusalem.*—VERS. 17–23.

17. Fear and pit and snare upon thee, O inhabitant of the land! 18. And it shall be that the (one) flying from the voice of the fear shall fall into the pit, and the (one) coming up from the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare; for windows from on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth are shaken. 19. Behold, broken is the earth; shattered, shattered is the earth; shaken, shaken is the earth. 20. The earth reels, reels like a drunken man, and is shaken like a hammock. And heavy upon her is her guilt, and she shall fall and rise no more. 21. And it shall be in that day that Jehovah shall visit upon the host of the high place, and upon the kings of the earth upon the earth. 22. And they shall be gathered with a gathering as prisoners in a pit, and shall be shut up in a dungeon, and after many days they shall be visited. 23. And the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, for Jehovah of hosts is King in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His elders there is glory.

IV.—*The Destruction of Babylon and the Deliverance of the Jews.*—CHAP. XXV. 1–5.

XXV.—1. Jehovah my God (art) Thou; I will exalt Thee; I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done a wonder, counsels from afar off, truth, certainty. 2. For Thou hast turned (it) from a city to a heap, a fortified town to a ruin, a palace of strangers from (being) a city; for ever it shall not be built. 3. Therefore a powerful people shall honour Thee, a city of terrible nations shall fear Thee. 4. For

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hearted groan. 8. The joyous playing of tabrets is silent; the noise of them that rejoice hath ceased; the joyous playing of the guitar is silent. 9. They drink no wine with a song: meth tastes bitter to them that drink it.

10. The city of Tohu is broken to pieces; every house is shut up, so that no man can come in. 11. There is lamentation for wine in the fields; all rejoicing has set; the delight of the earth is banished. 12. What is left of the city is wilderness, and the gate was shattered to ruins. 13. For so will it be within the earth, in the midst of the nations; as at the olive-beating, as at the gleaning, when the vintage is over.

14. They lift up the voice, and exult; for the majesty of Jehovah they shout from the sea! 15. Therefore praise ye Jehovah in the lands of the sun, in the islands of the sea the name of Jehovah the God of Israel. 16. From the border of the earth we hear songs: Praise to the Righteous One.

Then I said, Ruin to me! ruin to me! Robbers rob, and robbing, they rob as robbers. 17. Horror, and pit, and snare are over thee, O inhabitant of the earth! 18. And it cometh to pass, whoever fleeth from the tidings of horror falleth into the pit; and whoever escapeth out of the pit is caught in the snare: for the trap-doors on high are opened, and the firm foundations of the earth shake. 19. The earth rending, is rent asunder; the earth bursting, is burst in pieces; the earth shaking, tottereth. 20. The earth reeling, reeleth like a drunken man, and swingeth like a hammock; and its burden of sin presseth upon it; and it falleth, and riseth not again.

21. And it cometh to pass in that day, Jehovah will visit the army of the high place in the high place, and the kings of the earth on the earth. 22. And they are imprisoned, as one imprisons captives in the pit, and shut up in prison; and in the course of many days they are visited. 23. And the moon blushes, and the sun turns pale; for Jehovah of hosts reigns royally upon mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His elders is glory.

THE FOURFOLD MELODIOUS ECHO.—CHAPS. XXV., XXVI.

A.—*First Echo: Salvation of the Nations after the Fall of the Imperial City.*—CHAP. XXV. 1–8.

1. Jehovah, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name, that Thou hast wrought wonders, counsels from afar, sincerity, truth. 2. For Thou hast turned it from a city into a heap of stones, the steep castle into a ruin; the palace of the barbarians from being a city, to be rebuilt no more for ever. 3. Therefore a wild people will honour Thee, cities of violent nations fear Thee. 4. For

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Thou hast been a stronghold to the weak, a stronghold to the poor, in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible was like a storm against a wall. 5. As heat in a drought, the noise of strangers wilt Thou bring down; (as) heat by the shadow of a cloud, (so) shall the song of the tyrants be brought low.

V.—*A Promise of Favour to the Gentiles and the People of God when united on Mount Zion.* —VERS. 6–9.

6. And Jehovah of hosts will make, for all nations, in this mountain, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7. And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the veil, the veil upon all peoples, and the web, the (one) woven over all the nations. 8. He has swallowed up death for ever, and the Lord Jehovah wipes away tears from off all faces, and the reproach of His people He will take away from off all the earth, for Jehovah hath spoken (it). 9. And they shall say in that day, Lo, this is our God! we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is Jehovah; we have waited for Him; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.

VI.—*The Ruin of Moab.*—VERS. 10–12.

10. For the hand of Jehovah shall rest upon this mountain, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place as straw is trodden in the water of the dunghill. 11. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of it, as the swimmer spreadeth forth his hands to swim; and He shall humble his pride, together with the devices of his hands. 12. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls He hath cast down, humbled, brought to the ground, to the very dust.

VII.—*A Song of Praise and Deliverance.*— CHAP. XXVI. 1–19.

XXVI.—1. In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will He place (as) walls and breastwork. 2. Open ye the gates, and let the righteous nation enter, keeping truth. 3. The mind stayed (on Thee) Thou wilt preserve in peace, (in) peace, because in Thee (it is) confident. 4. Trust ye in Jehovah for ever, for in Jah Jehovah is a rock of ages.

5. For He hath brought down the inhabitants of the high place, the exalted city; He will lay it low. He will lay it low, to the very ground; He will bring it to the very dust. 6. The foot shall trample on it, the feet of the afflicted, the steps of the weak. 7. The way for the righteous is straight; Thou most upright wilt level the path of the righteous. 8. Also in the way of Thy judgments, O Jehovah, we have waited for Thee; to Thy name and Thy remembrance (was our) soul's desire. 9. (With) my soul have I de-

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Thou provest Thyself a stronghold to the lowly, a stronghold to the poor in his distress, as a shelter from the storm of rain, as a shadow from the burning of the sun; for the blast of the terrible ones was as a storm against a wall. 5. Like the burning of the sun in a parched land, Thou subduest the noise of the barbarians; (like) the burning of the sun through the shadow of a cloud, the triumphal song of the violent ones was brought low.

6. And Jehovah of hosts prepares for all nations upon this mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things rich in marrow, of wines on the lees thoroughly strained. 7. And He casts away upon this mountain the veil that veiled over all peoples, and the covering that covered over all nations. 8. He puts away death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah wipes the tear from every face; and He removes the shame of His people from the whole earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it.

B.—Second Echo: The Humiliation of Moab.— CHAP. XXV. 9–12.

9. And they say in that day, Behold our God, for whom we waited to help us: this is Jehovah, for whom we waited; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation. 10. For the hand of Jehovah will sink down upon this mountain, and Moab is trodden down there where it is, as straw is trodden down in the water of the dung-pit. 11. And he spreadeth out his hands in the pool therein, as the swimmer spreadeth them out to swim; but Jehovah forceth down the pride of Moab in spite of the artifices of his hands. 12. Yea, thy steep, towering walls He bows down, forces under, and casts earthwards into dust.

C.—Third Echo: Israel brought back, or Raised from the Dead.—CHAP. XXVI.

1. In that day will this song be sung in the land of Judah: A city of defence is ours; salvation He sets for walls and bulwarks. 2. Open ye the gates, that a righteous people may enter, one keeping truthfulness. 3. Thou keepest the firmly-established mind in peace, peace; for his confidence rests on Thee. 4. Hang confidently on Jehovah for ever: for in Jah, Jehovah, is an everlasting rock. 5. For He hath bent down them that dwell on high; the towering castle, He tore it down, tore it down to the earth, cast it into dust. 6. The foot treads it to pieces, feet of the poor, steps of the lowly. 7. The path that the righteous takes is smoothness; Thou makest the course of the righteous smooth.

8. We also have waited for Thee, that Thou shouldest come in the path of Thy judgments; the desire of the soul went after Thy name, and after Thy remembrance. 9. With my soul I desired Thee in the night; yea, with

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sired Thee in the night; yea (with) my spirit within me will I seek Thee early: for when Thy judgments (come) to the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. 10. Let the wicked be favoured, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of right, he will do wrong, and will not see the exaltation of Jehovah. 11. Jehovah, Thy hand is high, they will not see; (yes) they will see (and be ashamed) Thy zeal for Thy people; yea, the fire of Thine enemies shall devour them.

12. Jehovah, Thou wilt give us peace, for even all our works Thou hast wrought for us. 13. Jehovah, our God, (other) lords beside Thee have ruled us; (but henceforth) Thee, Thy name, only will we celebrate. 14. Dead, they shall not live: ghosts, they shall not rise: therefore Thou hast visited and destroyed them, and made all memory to perish with respect to them. 15. Thou hast added to the nation, O Jehovah, Thou hast added to the nation; thou hast glorified Thyself; Thou hast put far off all the ends of the land. 16. Jehovah, in distress they visited Thee; they uttered a whisper: Thy chastisement was on them.

17. As when a pregnant (woman) draws near to the birth, she writhes, she cries out in her pangs, so have we been from Thy presence, O Jehovah! 18. We were in travail, we were in pain, as it were we brought forth wind. Deliverances we could not make the land, nor would the inhabitants of the world fall. 19. Thy dead shall live, my corpses shall arise; (awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust!) for the dew of herbs is Thy dew, and (on) the earth (on) the dead, Thou wilt cause it to fall.

VIII.—*The Time is not Yet.*—VERS. 20, 21.

20. Go, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors after thee, hide thyself for a little moment, till the wrath be past. 21. For behold, Jehovah (is) coming out of His place, to visit the iniquity of the inhabitant of the earth upon him, and the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

IX.—*Israel's Chastisements and Jehovah's Judgments on His Enemies, with the glorious result thereof.*—CHAP. XXVII.

1. In that day shall Jehovah visit with His sword, the hard, the great, the strong (sword), upon leviathan the flying serpent, and upon leviathan the coiled serpent, and shall slay the dragon which (is) in the sea. 2. In that day, as a vineyard of wine, afflict her. 3. I Jehovah (am) keeping her; every moment I will water her; lest any hurt her, night and day will I keep her. 4. It is not because I am cruel or revengeful that I thus afflict my people, but because she is a vineyard overrun with thorns or briers, on account of which I must pass through her and burn

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my spirit deep within me, I longed to have Thee here: for when Thy judgments strike the earth, the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness.

10. If favour is shown to the wicked man, he does not learn righteousness; in the most upright land he acts wickedly, and has no eye for the majesty of Jehovah. 11. Jehovah, Thy hand has been exalted, but they did not see: they will see the zeal for a people, being put to shame; yea, fire will devour Thine adversaries. 12. Jehovah, Thou wilt ordain peace for us; for Thou hast accomplished all our work for us. 13. Jehovah our God, lords besides Thee had enslaved us; but through Thee we praise Thy name. 14. Dead men live not again, shades do not rise again; so hast Thou visited and destroyed them, and caused all their memory to perish. 15. Thou hast added to the nation, O Jehovah, hast added to the nation; glorified Thyself; moved out all the borders of the land.

16. Jehovah, in trouble they missed Thee, poured out light supplication when Thy chastisement came upon them. 17. As a woman with child, who draws near to her delivery, writhes and cries out in her pangs, so were we in Thy sight, O Jehovah. 18. We went with child, we writhed; it was as if we brought forth wind. We brought no deliverance to the land, and the inhabitants of the world did not come to the light.

19. Thy dead will live, my corpses rise again. Awake and rejoice, ye that lie in the dust! For thy dew is as the dew of the lights, and the earth will bring shades to the day.

20. Go in, my people, into thy chambers, and shut the door behind thee; hide thyself a little moment, till the judgment of wrath passes by. 21. For, behold, Jehovah goeth out of His place to visit the iniquity of the earth upon them; and the earth discloses the blood that it has sucked up, and no more covers her slain.

XXVII.—1. In that day will Jehovah visit with His sword, with the hard, and the great, and the strong, leviathan the fleet serpent, and leviathan the twisted serpent, and slay the dragon in the sea.

D.—*The Fourth Echo: The Fruit-bearing Vineyard under the Protection of Jehovah.*—CHAP. XXVII. 2–6.

2. In that day
A merry vineyard—sing it!
3. I, Jehovah, its keeper,
Every moment I water it.
That nothing may come near it,
I watch it night and day.
4. Wrath have I none;
Oh, had I thorns, thistles before me!
I would make up to them in battle,
Burn them all together.

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them out of her [Or, I am (no longer) angry with my people; O that their enemies, as thorns and briers, would array themselves against me, that I might rush upon them and consume them.] 5. Or let him lay hold of my strength and make peace with me; peace let him make with me.

6. (In) coming (days) shall Jacob take root, Israel shall bud and blossom, and they shall fill the face of the earth with fruit. 7. Like the smiting of his smiter did He smite him, or like the slaying of his slain was he slain?

8. In measure, by sending her away, Thou dost contend with her. He removes (her) by His hard wind in the day of the east wind. 9. Therefore by this (affliction) shall Jacob's iniquity be purged away, and this is all (its) fruit to take away his sin, (as will appear) in his placing all the stones of the (idolatrous) altar like limestones dashed in pieces (so that) groves and solar images shall arise no more.

10. For a fenced city shall be desolate, a dwelling-place broken up and forsaken like the wilderness. There shall the calf feed, and there shall it lie and consume her branches. 11. When its boughs are withered they shal' be broken off, women coming and burning them; because it is not a people of understanding, therefore its Creator shall not pity it, and its Maker shall not have mercy on it.

12. And it shall be in that day, that Jehovah shall gather in His fruit from the channel of the river to the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one to another, O ye children of Israel! 13. And it shall come to pass in that day, (that) a great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come that were wandering in the land of Assyria, and those exiled in the land of Egypt, and shall bow down to Jehovah, in the holy mountain, in Jerusalem.

THE DOWNFALL OF SAMARIA.—CHAP. XXVIII.

1. Woe to the high crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, and the fading flower, his ornament of beauty, which (is) on the head of the fat valley of the wine-smitten. 2. Behold the Lord has a strong and mighty one, like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty rushing waters. He has brought it to the ground with the hand. 3. With the feet shall be trodden the lofty crown of the drunkards of Ephraim. 4. And the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be like a first-ripe fig before summer, which he that sees it sees, and while it is yet in his hand swallows it.

5. In that day shall Jehovah of hosts become a crown of beauty and a diadem of glory to the remnant of His people; 6, and

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5. Men would then have to grasp at my protection.
Make peace with me,
Make peace with me.

6. In future will Jacob strike roots, Israel blossom and bud, and fill the surface of the globe with fruits.

JEHOVAH'S CHASTISING AND SAVING COURSE TOWARDS ISRAEL.—CHAP. XXVII. 7–13.

7. Hath He smitten it like the smiting of its smiter, or is it slain like the slaying of those slain by Him? 8. Thou punishedst it with measures, when Thou didst thrust it away, sifting with violent breath in the day of the east wind. 9. Therefore will the guilt of Jacob be purged thus; and this is all the fruit of the removal of his sin: when He maketh all altar-stones like chalk-stones that are broken in pieces, Astarte images and sun-pillars do not rise up again. 10. For the strong city is solitary, a dwelling given up and forsaken like the steppe: there calves feed, and there they lie down, and eat of its branches. 11. When its branches become withered, they are broken: women come, make fires with them; for it is not a people of intelligence: therefore its Creator has no pity upon it, and its Former does not pardon it.

12. And it will come to pass on that day, Jehovah will appoint a beating of corn from the water-flood of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and ye will be gathered one by one, O sons of Israel. 13. And it will come to pass in that day, a great trumpet will be blown, and the lost ones in the land of Asshur come, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and cast themselves down before Jehovah on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

PART V.

BOOK OF WOES; OR, HISTORICAL DISCOURSES RELATING TO ASSHUR AND THE EGYPTIAN ALLIANCE.—CHAPS. XXVIII.—XXXIII.

The First Woe.—Judgment upon Samaria and Jerusalem, and Consolation for Both.—CHAP. XXVIII.

1. Woe to the proud crown of the drunken of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of its splendid ornament, which is upon the head of the luxuriant valley of those slain with wine.

2. Behold, the Lord holds a strong and mighty thing like a hailstorm, a pestilent tempest; like a storm of mighty overflowing waters, He casts down to the earth with almighty hand. 3. With feet they tread down the proud crown of the drunken of Ephraim. 4. And it happens to the fading flower of its splendid ornament, which is upon the head of the luxuriant valley, as to an early fig before it is harvest, which whosoever sees it looks at, and it is no longer in his hand than he swallows it.

5. In that day will Jehovah of hosts be the adorning crown and the splendid diadem to the remnant of His people; 6, and the spirit

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for a spirit of judgment to Him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

7. And (yet) even these through wine have erred, and through strong drink have gone astray. Priest and prophet have erred through strong drink, have been swallowed up of wine, have been led astray by strong drink, have erred in vision, have wavered in judgment. 8. For all tables are full of vomit, of filth, without a (clean) place. 9. Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand doctrine? Those weaned from the milk and removed from the breasts. 10. For (it is) rule upon rule, rule upon rule, line upon line, line upon line, a little here, a little there. 11. For with stammering lips and with another tongue will he speak unto this people. 12. Who said to them, This is rest, give rest to the weary, and this is quiet, but they would not hear. 13. And the word of Jehovah was to them rule upon rule, rule upon rule; line upon line, line upon line; a little here, a little there; that they might go, and fall backwards, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

14. Therefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scornful men, the rulers of this people which is in Jerusalem. 15. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell have formed a league; the overflowing scourge, when it passes through, shall not come upon us, for we have made falsehood our refuge, and in fraud we have hid ourselves; 16, therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion a stone, a stone of proof, a corner-stone of value, of a firm foundation; the believer will not be in haste. 17. And I will place judgment for a line and justice for a plummet, and hail shall sweep away the refuge of falsehood, and the hiding-place waters shall overflow. 18. And your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your league with hell shall not stand, and the overflowing scourge—for it shall pass through, and ye shall be for it to trample on. 19. And as soon as it passes through, it shall carry you away; for every morning it shall pass through, in the day and in the night, and only vexation shall be the understanding of the thing heard. 20. For the bed is too short to stretch one's self, and the covering too narrow to wrap one's self. 21. For like mount Perazim shall Jehovah rise up, like the valley in Gibeon, shall He rage, to do His work, His strange work, and to perform His task, His strange task. 22. And now scoff not, lest your bands be strong; for even a decreed consumption I have heard from the Lord Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth.

23. Give ear and hear my voice; hearken and hear my speech. 24. Does the husbandman plough every day to sow? Does he open and level his ground? 25. Does he not, when he has levelled the surface of it, cast abroad dill, and scatter cummin, and set wheat in rows, and barley (in the place)

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of justice to them that sit on the judgment-seat, and heroic strength to them that drive back war at the gate.

7. And they also reel with wine, and are giddy with meth; priest and prophet reel with meth, reel when seeing visions, stagger when pronouncing judgment. 8. For all tables are full of filthy vomit, without any more place.

9. Whom then would he teach knowledge? And to whom make preaching intelligible? To those weaned from the milk. To those removed from the breast. 10. For precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, a little here, a little there?

11. For through men stammering in speech, and through a strange tongue will he speak to this people. 12. He who said to them, There is rest, give rest to weary ones, and there is refreshing! But they would not hear. 13. Therefore the word of Jehovah becomes to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, a little here, a little there, that they may go and stumble backwards, and be wrecked to pieces, and be snared and taken.

14. Therefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scornful lords, rulers of this people which is in Jerusalem! 15. For ye say, We have made a covenant with death, and with Hades we have come to an agreement. The swelling scourge, when it cometh hither, will do us no harm; for we have made a lie our shelter, and in deceit have we hidden ourselves. 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am He who laid in Zion a stone, a stone of trial, a precious corner-stone of well-founded founding; whoever believes will not have to move. 17. And I make justice the line, and righteousness the level; and hail sweeps away the refuge of lies, and the hiding-place is washed away by waters.

18. And your covenant with death is struck out, and your agreement with Hades will not stand; the swelling scourge when it comes, ye will become a thing trodden down to it. 19. And as often as it passes it takes you: for every morning it passes, by day and by night; and it is nothing but shuddering to hear such preaching. 20. For the bed is too short to stretch in, and the covering too tight when a man wraps himself in it.

21. For Jehovah will rise up as in the mountain of Perazim, and be wroth as in the valley at Gibeon to work His work; and to act His act; strange is His act.

22. And now drive ye not mockeries, lest your fetters be strengthened; for I have heard from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, a judgment of destruction, and an irrevocable one, upon the whole earth.

23. Lend me your ear, and hear my voice; attend, and hear my address! 24. Does the husbandman plough continually to sow? to furrow and to harrow his land? 25. Is it not so: when he levels the surface thereof, he scatters black poppy seed, and strews cummin, and puts in wheat in rows, and barley in the

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marked out, and spelt in his border? 26. So teaches him aright, his God instructs him. 27. For not with the sledge must dill be threshed, or the cart wheel turned upon cummin; for with the stick must dill be beaten, and cummin with the rod. 28. Bread-corn must be crushed, for he will not be always threshing it; so he drives the wheel of his cart (upon it), but with his horses he does not crush it. 29. Even this from Jehovah of hosts comes forth; He is wonderful in counsel; great in wisdom.

PROPHECY CONCERNING JERUSALEM.—CHAP. XXIX.

1. Alas for Ariel, Ariel, the city David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts revolve; 2, and I will distress Ariel, and there shall be sadness and sorrow, and it shall be to me as Ariel. 3. And I will camp against thee round about, and push against thee a post, and raise against thee ramparts. 4. And thou shalt be brought down, out of the ground shalt thou speak, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be like (the voice of) a spirit, out of the ground, and out of the dust shall thy speech mutter.

5. Then shall be like fine dust the multitude of thy strangers, and like passing chaff the multitude of the terrible ones, and it shall be in a moment suddenly. 6. From the presence of Jehovah shall it be visited with thunder, and earthquake, and great noise, tempest and storm, and flame of devouring fire. 7. Then shall be as a dream, a vision of the night, the multitude of all the nations fighting against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and distress her. 8. And it shall be as when the hungry dreams, and lo he eats, and he awakes, and his soul is empty; and as when the thirsty dreams, and lo he drinks, and he awakes, and lo he is faint and his soul craving: so shall be the multitude of all the nations that fight against mount Zion.

9. Waver and wonder! be merry and blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they reel, but not with strong drink. 10. For Jehovah hath poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and hath shut your eyes, the prophets, even your heads the seers, hath He covered. 11. And the vision of the whole is to you like the words of the sealed writing, which they give to one knowing writing, saying, Pray read this, and he says, I cannot, for it is sealed. 12. And the writing is given to one who knows not writing, saying, Pray read this, and he says, I know not writing. 13. And the Lord said, Because this people draws near with its mouth, and with its lips they honour me, and its heart it puts far from me, and their fearing me is a precept of men, (a thing) taught, 14, therefore, behold, I will continue to treat this people strangely, very strangely, and with strangeness, and the

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appointed piece, and spelt on its border? 26. And He has instructed him how to act rightly: his God teaches him.

27. For the black poppy is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a cart wheel rolled over cummin; but black poppy is knocked out with a stick, and cummin with a staff. 28. Is bread-corn crushed? No; he does not go on threshing for ever, and drive the wheel of his cart and his horses over it: he does not crush it. 29. This also, it goeth forth from Jehovah of hosts: He gives wonderful intelligence, high understanding.

The Second Woe.—The Oppression and Deliverance of Ariel.—CHAP. XXIX.

1. Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the castle where David pitched his tent! Add year to year, let the feasts revolve: 2, then I distress Ariel, and there is groaning and moaning; and so she proves herself to me as Ariel. 3. And I encamp in a circle round about thee, and surround thee with watch-posts, and erect tortoises against thee. 4. And when brought down thou wilt speak out of the ground, and thy speaking will sound low out of the dust; and thy voice cometh up like that of a demon from the ground, and thy speaking will whisper out of the dust.

5. And the multitude of thy foes will become like finely powdered dust, and the multitude of tyrants like chaff flying away; and it will take place suddenly, very suddenly. 6. From Jehovah of hosts there comes a visitation with crash of thunder and earthquake and great noise, whirlwind and tempest, and the blazing up of devouring fire. 7. And the multitude of all the nations that gather together against Ariel, and all those who storm and distress Ariel and her stronghold, will be like a vision of the night in a dream. 8. And it is just as a hungry man dreams, and behold he eats; and when he wakes up his soul is empty: and just as a thirsty man dreams, and behold he drinks; and when he wakes up, behold, he is faint, and his soul is parched with thirst; so will it be to the multitude of the nations which gather together against the mountain of Zion.

9. Stop and stare; blind yourselves, and grow blind!

They are drunken, and not with wine; they reel, and not with meth. 10. For Jehovah hath poured upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and bound up your eyes; the prophets and your heads, the seers, He has veiled. 11. And the revelation of all this will be to you like the words of a sealed writing, which they give to him that understands writing, saying, Pray, read this; but he says, I cannot, it is sealed. 12. And they give the writing to one who does not understand writing, saying, Pray, read this; but he says, I do not understand writing.

13. The Lord hath spoken: Because this people approaches me with its mouth, and honours me with its lips, and keeps its heart far from me, and its reverence for me has become as a commandment learned from men; 14,

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wisdom of its wise ones shall be lost, and the prudence of its prudent ones shall hide itself. 15. Alas for those going deep from Jehovah to hide counsel, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who sees us, and who knows us? 16. Your perversion! Is the potter to be reckoned as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, He made me not, and the thing formed say of its former, He does not understand!

17. Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned to a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be reckoned to the forest? 18. And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and out of obscurity and darkness shall the eyes of the blind see. 19. And the humble shall rejoice more and more in Jehovah, and the poor among men in the Holy One of Israel shall rejoice. 20. For the violent is at an end, and the scoffer ceaseth, and all the watchers for injustice are cut off: 21, making a man a sinner for a word, and for him disputing in the gate they laid a snare, and turned aside the righteous through deceit. 22. Therefore thus saith Jehovah to the house of Jacob, He who redeemed Abraham, Not now shall Jacob be ashamed, and not now shall his face turn pale. 23. For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, yes, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and the God of Israel they shall fear. 24. Then shall the erring in spirit know wisdom, and the rebels shall receive instruction.

THE SIN AND THE FOLLY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL IN SEEKING FOREIGN AID AGAINST THEIR ENEMIES.—CHAPS. XXX., XXXI.

XXX.—1. Woe to the disobedient children, saith Jehovah, (so disobedient as) to form (or execute) a plan and not from me, and to weave a web, but not (of) my Spirit, for the sake of adding sin to sin; 2, those walking to go down to Egypt, and my mouth they have not consulted, to take refuge in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. 3. And the strength of Egypt shall be to you for shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt for confusion. 4. For his chiefs are in Zoan, and his ambassadors arrive at Hanes. 5. All are ashamed of a people who cannot profit them, a people not for help and not for profit, but for shame, and also for disgrace. 6. The burden of the beasts of the south, in a land of suffering and distress, whence (are) the adder and the fiery flying serpent; they are carrying on the shoulders of young asses their wealth, and on the hump of camels their treasures, to a people who cannot profit; 7, and the Egyptians in vain and to no purpose shall they help. Therefore I cry concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

8. And now go, write it with them on a table, and inscribe it in a book, and let it be

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therefore, behold, I will proceed wondrously with this people, wondrously and marvellously strange; and the wisdom of its wise men is lost, and the understanding of its intelligent men becomes invisible.

15. Woe unto them that hide plans deep from Jehovah, and their doing occurs in a dark place, and they say, Who saw us then, and who knew about us? 16. Oh for your perversity! It is to be regarded as potter's clay; that a work could say to its maker, He has not made me; and an image to its sculptor, He does not understand it!

17. Is it not yet a very little, and Lebanon is turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field esteemed as a forest? 18. And in that day the deaf hear scripture words, and the eyes of the blind will see out of obscurity and out of darkness. 19. And the joy of the humble increases in Jehovah, and the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20. For tyrants are gone, and it is over with scoffers; and all who think evil are rooted out, 21, who condemn a man for a word, and lay snares for him that is free-spoken in the gate, and overthrow the righteous through shameful lies.

22. Therefore thus saith Jehovah of the house of Jacob, He who redeemed Abraham: Jacob shall not henceforth be ashamed, nor shall his face turn pale any more. 23. For when he, when his children see the work of my hands in the midst of him, they will sanctify My name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shudder before the God of Israel. 24. And those who were of an erring spirit discern understanding, and murmurers accept instruction.

The Third Woe.—The Momentous Result of the Alliance with Egypt.—CHAP. XXX.

1. Woe to the stubborn children, saith Jehovah, to drive plans, and not by my impulse, and to plait alliance, and not according to my spirit, to heap sin upon sin; 2, that go away to travel down to Egypt, without having asked my mouth, to fly to Pharaoh's shelter, and to conceal themselves under the shadow of Egypt. 3. And Pharaoh's shelter becomes a shame to them, and the concealment under the shadow of Egypt is a disgrace. 4. For Judah's princes have appeared in Zoan, and his ambassadors arrive in Haran. 5. They will all have to be ashamed of a people useless to them, that brings no help and no use, but shame, and also reproach.

6. Oracle concerning the water-oxen of the south: Through a land of distress and confinement, whence the lioness and lion, adders and flying dragons; they carry their possessions on the shoulders of asses' foals, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a nation that profits nothing. 7. And Egypt, worthlessly and hollowly will they help; therefore I call this Egypt, Great-mouth sits still.

8. Now go, write it on a table with them.

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for a future day, for ever, to eternity. 9. For a rebellious people is it, lying children, children who are not willing to learn the law of Jehovah; 10, who say to the seers, Ye shall not see, and to the viewers, Ye shall not view for us right things; speak unto us smooth things, view deceits, 11, depart from the way, sever from the path, cause to cease from before us the Holy One of Israel. 12. Therefore, thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because of your rejecting this word, and (because) ye have trusted in oppression and perverseness and have relied thereon, 13, therefore shall their iniquity be to you like a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking may come suddenly, at (any) instant. 14. And it is broken like the breaking of a potter's vessel, broken unsparingly, so that there is not found among its fragments a sherd to take up fire from a hearth, and to dip up water from a pool. 15. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in remaining quiet and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. 16. And ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee; and upon the swift will we ride; therefore shall your pursuers be swift. 17. One thousand shall flee from before the menace of one, from before the rebuke of five shall ye flee, until ye are left like a pole on the top of the mountain, and like the signal on the hill. 18. And therefore will Jehovah wait to have mercy upon you, and therefore will He rise up to pity you, for a God of judgment is Jehovah; blessed are all that wait for Him. 19. For the people in Zion shall dwell in Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more; He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; as He hears it He will answer thee. 20. And the Lord will give you bread of affliction and water of oppression, and no more shall thy teachers hide themselves, and thine eyes shall see thy teachers. 21. And thine ears shall hear a voice from behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right and when ye turn to the left. 22. And he shall defile the covering of thy idols of silver and the case of thy image of gold; thou shalt scatter them as an abominable thing. Away! shalt thou say to it. 23. And He shall give the rain of thy seed, with which thou shalt sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, and it shall be fat and rich; thy cattle shall feed that day in an enlarged pasture. 24. And the oxen and the asses working the ground shall eat salted provender which has been winnowed with the sieve and fan. 25. And there shall be, on every high mountain, and on every elevated hill, channels, streams of waters, in the day of great slaughter, when towers fall. 26. And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day of Jehovah's binding

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and note it in a book, and let it stand there for future days, for ever, to eternity.

9. For it is a refractory people, lying children, children who do not like to hear the instruction of Jehovah; 10, who say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things! Speak flatteries to us! 11. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, remove from our face the Holy One of Israel.

12. Therefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye dislike this word, and put your trust in force and shufflings, and rely upon this; 13, therefore will this iniquity be to you like a falling breach, bent forwards in a high-towering wall, which falls to ruin suddenly, very suddenly. 14. And He smites it to pieces, as a potter's vessel falls to pieces when they smash it without sparing, and of which, when it lies smashed to pieces there, you cannot find a sherd to fetch fire with from the hearth, or to take water with out of a cistern.

15. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, Through turning and rest ye would be helped; your strength would show itself in quietness and confidence; but ye would not. 16. And ye said, No, but we will fly upon horses; therefore ye shall flee: and, We will ride upon race-horses; therefore your pursuers will race. 17. A thousand, ye will flee from the threatening of one, from the threatening of five, until ye are reduced to a remnant, like a pine upon the top of the mountain, and like a banner upon the hill.

18. And therefore will Jehovah wait till He inclines towards you, and therefore will He withdraw Himself on high till He has mercy upon you; for Jehovah is a God of right, salvation to those who wait for Him.

19. For a people continues dwelling in Zion, in Jerusalem; thou shalt not weep for ever: He will prove Himself gracious to thee at the sound of thy cry for help; as soon as He hears, He answers thee. 20. And the Lord giveth you bread in penury, and water for your need; and thy teachers will not hide themselves any more, and thine eyes come to see thy teachers. 21. And thine ears will hear words behind thee, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it!" whether ye turn to the right hand or the left. 22. And ye defile the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the clothing of thy molten images of gold; thou wilt scatter them like a filthy thing: "Get out!" thou sayest to it.

23. And He gives rain to thy seed, with which thou sowest the land; and bread of the produce of the land, and it is full of sap and fat; in that day your flocks will feed in roomy pastures. 24. And the oxen and the young asses, which work the land, salted mash will they eat, which is winnowed with the winnowing shovel and winnowing fork! 25. And upon every high mountain, and every hill that rises high, there are springs, brooks in the day of the great massacre, when the towers fall.

26. And the light of the moon will be as

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up the breach of His people, and the stroke of His wound He will heal.

27. Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from afar, burning His anger, and heavy the ascent (of smoke); His lips are full of wrath, and His tongue as a devouring fire. 28. And His breath, like an overflowing stream, shall divide as far as the neck, to sift the nations in the sieve of falsehood, and a misleading bridle on the jaws of the people. 29. Your song shall be like the night of the consecration of a feast, and your joy shall be like (that of) one marching with the pipe to go into the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel. 30. And Jehovah shall cause to be heard the majesty of His voice, and the descent of His arm shall He cause to be seen, with indignation of anger and a flame of devouring fire, scattering, and rain, and hailstones. 31. For at the voice of Jehovah shall Assyria be broken, with the rod shall He smite. 32. And every passage of the rod of doom, which Jehovah will lay upon him, shall be with tabrets and harps, and with fights of shaking it is fought therein. 33. Nor arranged since yesterday is Tophet; even for the king it is prepared; He has deepened, He has widened (it); its pile fire and wood in plenty; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, kindles it.

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the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be multiplied sevenfold, like the light of seven days, in the day that Jehovah bindeth the hurt of His people, and healeth the crushing of His stroke.

27. Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from far, burning His wrath, and quantity of smoke: His lips are full of wrathful foam, and His tongue like devouring fire. 28. And His breath is like an overflowing brook, which reaches half-way to the neck, to sift nations in the sieve of nothingness; and a misleading bridle comes to the cheeks of the nations.

29. Your song will then sound as in the night, when the feast is celebrated; and ye will have joy of heart like those who march with the playing of flutes, to go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel.

30. And Jehovah causes His majestic voice to be heard, and causes the lowering of His arm to be seen, with the snorting of wrath and the blazing of devouring fire, the bursting of a cloud, and pouring of rain and hailstones. 31. For Asshur will be terrified at the voice of Jehovah, when He smites with the staff. 32. And it will come to pass, every stroke of the rod of destiny, which Jehovah causes to fall upon Asshur, is dealt amid the noise of drums and the playing of guitars; and in battles of swinging arm He fights it. 33. For a place for the sacrifice of abominations has long been made ready, even for the king it is prepared; deep, broad has He made it: its funeral-pile has fire and wood in abundance; the breath of Jehovah like a stream of brimstone sets it on fire.

The Fourth Woe.—The False Help; The Despised One Pitied; and the New Era.—CHAPS. XXXI.–XXXII. 8.

XXXI. 1.—Woe to those going down to Egypt for help, and on horses they rely and trust in cavalry, because it is numerous, and on horsemen, because they are very strong, and they look not to the Holy One of Israel, and Jehovah they seek not. 2. And (yet) He too is wise, and brings evil, and His words He removes not, and He rises up against the house of evil-doers, and against the help of the workers of iniquity. 3. And Egypt (is) man, and their horses flesh and not spirit; and Jehovah shall stretch out His hand, and the helper shall stumble, and the helped fall, and together all of them shall cease.

4. For thus saith Jehovah unto me, As a lion growls, and a young lion over his prey, against whom a multitude of shepherds is called forth, at their voice he is not frightened, and at their noise he is not humbled, so will Jehovah of hosts come down, to fight upon mount Zion and upon her hill. 5. As birds flying (over or around their nests), so will Jehovah cover over Jerusalem, cover and rescue, pass over and save.

6. Return unto Him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. 7

1. Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely upon horses, and put their trust in chariots, that there are many of them, and in horsemen, that there is a powerful multitude of them; and do not look up to the Holy One of Israel, and do not inquire for Jehovah! 2. And yet He also is wise; thus then He brings evil, and sets not His words aside; and rises up against the house of miscreants, and against the help of evil-doers. 3. And Egypt is man, and not God; and its horses flesh, and not spirit. And when Jehovah stretches out His hand, the helper stumbles, and he that is helped falls, and they all perish together.

4. For thus hath Jehovah spoken unto me, As the lion growls and the young lion over its prey, against which a whole crowd of shepherds is called together; he is not alarmed at their cry, and does not surrender at their noise; so will Jehovah of hosts descend to the campaign against the mountain of Zion, and against their hill. 5. Like fluttering birds, so will Jehovah of hosts screen Jerusalem; screening and delivering, sparing and setting free.

6. Turn ye unto Him, O sons of Israel, to Him

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For in that day they shall reject, a man his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your sinful hands have made for you [or, which your own hands have made for you as sin]. 8. And Assyria shall fall by no man's sword, and no mortal's work shall devour him, and he shall flee from before the sword, and his young men shall become tributary. 9. And his rock from fear shall pass away, and his chiefs shall be afraid of a standard, saith Jehovah, to whom there is a fire in Zion and a furnace in Jerusalem.

CONTINUATION OF PROMISES.—CHAP. XXXII. 1–8.

1. Behold, for righteousness shall reign a king, and rulers for justice shall rule. 2. And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the rain (or storm), as channels of water in a dry place (or in drought), as the shadow of a heavy rock in a weary land.

3. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. 4. And the heart (or, mind) of the rash (heedless or reckless) shall understand to know (or, understand knowledge), and the tongue of stammerers shall hasten to speak clear things.

5. The fool will no longer be called noble, and the churl will no longer be spoken of (or, to) as liberal. 6. The fool (is one who) will speak folly, and his heart will do iniquity, to do wickedness and to speak error unto (or, against) Jehovah, to starve (or, leave empty) the soul of the hungry, and the drink of the thirsty he will suffer to fail. 7. And as for the churl, his arms (or, instruments) are evil. He deviseth plots to destroy the oppressed (or afflicted) with words of falsehood, even in the poor (man's) speaking right. 8. The noble (or, generous) man devises noble (or, generous) things, and in noble (or, generous) things he perseveres.

THREATENINGS ADDRESSED TO THE WOMEN OF JUDAH.—CHAP. XXXII. 9–20.

9. Careless women, arise, hear my voice; confiding daughters, give ear unto my speech.

10. In a year and more ye shall tremble, ye confiding ones, for the vintage fails, the gathering shall not come. 11. Tremble, ye careless (women); quake, ye confiding (ones); strip you and make you bare, and gird (sackcloth) on your loins. 12. Mourning for the breasts (or, beating on the breasts), for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13. Upon the land of my people, thorn (and) thistle shall come up, for (they shall even come up) upon all (thy) houses of pleasure, O joyous city (or, upon all houses of pleasure *in* the joyous city). 14. For the palace is forsaken, the crowd of the city (or, the crowded city) left, hill and watch-tower (are) for caves

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from whom men have so deeply departed. 7. For in that day they will abhor every one their silver idols and their gold idols, which your hands have made to you for a sin. 8. And Asshur falls by a sword not of a man, and a sword not of a man will devour him; and he flees before a sword, and his young men become tributary. 9. And his rock, for fear it will pass away, and his princes be frightened away by the flags: the saying of Jehovah, who has His fire in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem.

XXXII.—1. Behold the king will reign according to righteousness; and the princes, according to right will they command. 2. And every one will be like a shelter from the wind, and a covert from the storm; like water-brooks in a dry place, like the shadow of a gigantic rock in a languishing land.

3. And the eyes of the seeing no more are closed, and the ears of the hearing attend. 4. And the heart of the hurried understands to know, and the tongue of stammerers speaks clear things with readiness.

5. The fool will no more be called a nobleman, nor the crafty a gentleman. 6. For a fool speaks follies, and his heart does godless things, to practise tricks and to speak error against Jehovah, to leave the soul of hungry men empty, and to withhold the drink of thirsty ones. 7. And the craft of a crafty man is evil, who devises stratagems to destroy suffering ones by lying words, even when the needy exhibits his right. 8. But a noble man deviseth noble things, and to noble things he adheres.

AGAINST THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM.—CHAP. XXXII. 9–20.

Appendix to the Fourth Woe.

9. Ye contented women, rise up, hear my voice; ye confident daughters, hearken to my speech! 10. Days to the year: then will ye tremble, confident ones! for it is all over with the vintage, the fruit harvest comes to nought. 11. Tremble, contented ones! Quake, ye confident ones! Strip, make yourselves bare, and gird your loins with sackcloth! 12. They smite upon their breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13. On the land of my people there come up weeds, briers; yea, upon all joyous houses of the rejoicing city. 14. For the palace is made solitary; the crowd of the city is left desolate; the ofel and watch-tower serve as caves for ever, for the delight of wild asses, for the tending of flocks.

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(or, dens) for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks.

15. Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is reckoned to the forest. 16. And justice shall abide in the wilderness, and righteousness in the fruitful field shall dwell. 17. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness rest and assurance (or, security) for ever. 18. And my people shall abide in a house of peace, in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.

19. And it shall hail in the downfall of the forest, and the city shall be low in a low place (or, humbled with humiliation). 20. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the foot of the ox and the ass.

THREATENING OF RETRIBUTION TO THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE.—CHAP. XXXIII.

1. Woe to thee spoiling and thou wast not spoiled, deceiving and they did not spoil thee! When thou shalt cease to spoil thou shalt be spoiled, and when thou art done deceiving they shall deceive thee. 2. Jehovah, favour us, for on Thee we wait; be their arm in the mornings, also our salvation in times of trouble. 3. At the noise of tumult (or, tumultuous noise) the people flee; at Thy rising the nations are scattered. 4. And your spoil shall be gathered (like) the gathering of the devourer; like the running of locusts running on it. 5. Exalted is Jehovah because dwelling on high; He fills (or, has filled) Zion with judgment and righteousness. 6. And He shall be the security of thy times, strength of salvations, wisdom and knowledge, the fear of Jehovah, that is his treasure.

7. Behold, their valiant ones cry without; the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly. 8. The highways are wasted, the wayfarer ceaseth; he breaks the covenant, despises cities, values no man. 9. The land mourneth, languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed, it pines away; Sharon is like a wilderness, and Bashan and Carmel cast (their leaves). 10. Now will I arise, saith Jehovah, now will I be lifted up, now will I exalt myself. 11. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble; your breath as stubble shall devour you. 12. And nations shall be like lime-kilns (or, like burnings of lime); thorns cut up, in the fire they shall burn. 13. Hear, ye far, what I have done, and know, ye near, my might.

14. Afraid in Zion are the sinners; trembling has seized the impious. Who of us can dwell with the devouring fire, who of us can dwell with everlasting burnings? 15. Walking righteousnesses, and speaking right things, rejecting with contempt the gain of oppressions (or, extortions), shaking his hands from taking hold of the bribe, stopping his ears from hearing bloods, shutting his eyes from looking at evil, he high places shall inhabit: fastnesses of rocks (shall be) his lofty place;

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15. Until the Spirit is poured out over us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as the forest. 16. And justice makes its abode in the desert, and righteousness settles down upon the fruit-field. 17. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the reward of righteousness rest and security for ever. 18. And my people dwells in a place of peace, and in trustworthy, safe dwellings, and in cheerful resting-places. 19. And it hails with the overthrow of the forest, and into lowliness must the city be brought low.

20. Blessed are ye that sow by all waters, and let the foot of the oxen and asses rove in freedom.

The Fifth Woe.—Woe concerning Asshur; Deliverance and Glory of Jerusalem.—CHAP. XXXIII.

1. Woe, devastator, and thyself not devastated; and thou spoiler, and still not spoiled! Hast thou not done with devastating? thou shalt be devastated. Hast thou attained to rob? men rob thee.

2. Jehovah, be gracious to us; we wait for Thee: be their arm every morning, yea, our salvation in time of need!

3. At the sound of a noise peoples pass away; at Thy rising nations are scattered. 4. And your booty is swept away as a swarm of locusts sweeps away; as beetles run, they run upon it.

5. Jehovah is exalted; for dwelling on high, He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. 6. And there will be security of thy times, riches of salvation, of wisdom, and knowledge. Fear of Jehovah is then the treasure of Judah.

7. Behold, their heroes weep without; the messengers of peace weep bitterly. 8. Desolate are roads, disappeared are travellers; he has broken covenant, insulted cities, despised men. 9. The land mourns, languishes; Lebanon stands ashamed, parched; the meadow of Sharon has become like a steppe, and Bashan and Carmel shake their leaves. 10. Now will I arise, saith Jehovah, now exalt myself, now lift up myself.

11. Ye are pregnant with hay, ye bring forth stubble! Your snorting is the fire that will devour you. 12. And nations become as lime burnings, thorns cut off, which are kindled with fire.

13. Hear, ye distant ones, what I have accomplished; and perceive, ye near ones, my omnipotence! 14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling seizes the hypocrites: who of us can dwell with devouring fire? who of us abide with everlasting burnings?

15. He that walketh in righteousness, and speaketh uprightness; he that despiseth gain of oppressions, whose hand keepeth from grasping bribes; he that stoppeth his ear from hearing murderous counsel, and shutteth his eyes from looking at evil; 16, he will dwell upon high places; rocky fastnesses are

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his bread is given, his water sure. 17. A king in his beauty shall thine eyes behold, they behold a land of distances. 18. Thy heart shall meditate terror. Where is he that counted? Where is he that weighed? Where is he that counted the towers? 19. The fierce (or, determined) people thou shalt not see; a people deep of lip from hearing, of barbarous tongue without meaning.

20. Behold Zion, the city of our festivals! Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet home, a tent that shall not be removed. Its stakes shall not be pulled up for ever, and all its cords shall not be broken. 21. But there shall Jehovah be mighty for us; a place of rivers, streams broad (on) both sides; there shall not go in it an oared vessel, and a gallant ship shall not pass through it. 22. For Jehovah our Judge, Jehovah our Lawgiver, Jehovah our King, He will save us.

23. Thy ropes are cast loose; they do not hold upright their mast; they do not spread the sail; then is shared plunder of booty in plenty; the lame spoil the spoil.

24. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick. The people dwelling in it (is) forgiven (its) iniquity.

THREATENINGS AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH, WITH PROMISES TO THE CHURCH ITSELF.—CHAPS. XXXIV., XXXV.

1. Come near, ye nations, to hear; and ye peoples, hearken. Let the earth hear, and its fulness, the world and all its issues. 2. For Jehovah is angry against all the nations, and has wrath against all their host; He has doomed them, He has given them to the slaughter. 3. And their slain shall be cast out, and their carcases, their stench shall go up; and mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4. And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll, and all their host shall fade like the fading of a leaf from off a vine, and like a fading (leaf) or a withered (fig) from a fig-tree.

5. For my sword is steeped in heaven; behold, upon Edom shall it come down, and upon the people of my curse. 6. Jehovah has a sword; it is full of blood, it is smeared with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. 7. And unicorns shall come down with them, and bullocks with bulls. And their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust with fat shall be fattened. 8. For there is a day of vengeance to Jehovah, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. 9. And her streams shall be turned to pitch, and her dust to brimstone, and her land shall become burning pitch. 10. Day and night it shall not be quenched; for ever shall its smoke go up; from generation to generation shall it lie waste; for ever and ever there shall be no one passing through it. 11. Then

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his castle; his bread is abundant, his waters inexhaustible.

17. Thine eyes will see the king in his beauty, will see a land that is very far off.

18. Thy heart meditates upon the shuddering. Where is the valuer? where is the weigher? where he who counted the towers? The rough people thou seest no more, a people of deep inaudible lip, of stammering unintelligible tongue.

20. Look upon Zion, the castle of our festal meeting. Thine eyes will see Jerusalem, a pleasant place, a tent that does not wander about, whose pegs are never drawn, and none of whose cords are ever broken. 21. No, there dwells for us a glorious One, Jehovah; a place of streams, canals of wide extent, into which no fleet of rowing vessels ventures, and which no strong man of war shall cross. 22. For Jehovah is our Judge; Jehovah is our war-Prince; Jehovah is our King; He will bring us salvation.

23. Thy ropes hang loose; they do not hold fast the support of thy mast; they do not hold the flag extended: then is the booty of plunder divided in abundance; even lame men share the prey. 24. And not an inhabitant will say, I am weak: the people settled there have their sins forgiven.

PART VI.

FINALE OF THE JUDGMENT UPON ALL THE WORLD (MORE ESPECIALLY UPON EDOM) AND REDEMPTION OF THE PEOPLE OF JEHOVAH.—CHAPS. XXXIV., XXXV.

1. Come near, ye peoples, to hear; and ye nations, attend. Let the earth hear, and that which fills it, the world, and everything that springs from it. 2. For the indignation of Jehovah will fall upon all nations, and burning wrath upon all their host; He has laid the ban upon them, delivered them to the slaughter. 3. And their slain are cast away, and their corpses—their stench will arise, and mountains melt with their blood. 4. And all the host of the heavens are rolled up like a scroll, and all their host withers as a leaf withers away from the vine, and like withered leaves from the fig-tree.

5. For my sword has become intoxicated in the heaven; behold, it comes down upon Edom, and upon the people of my ban to judgment. 6. The sword of Jehovah fills itself with blood, is fattened with fat, with blood of lambs and he-goats, with kidney-fat of rams; for Jehovah has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. 7. And buffaloes fall with them, and bullocks together with bulls; and their land becomes intoxicated with blood, and their dust fattened with fat.

8. For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense, to contend for Zion. 9. And the brooks of Edom are turned into pitch, and its dust into brimstone, and its land becomes burning pitch. 10. Day and

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shall possess it the pelican and the porcupine, the crane and the crow shall dwell in it. And one shall stretch upon it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness. 12. Her caves —and there is no one there they will (still) call a kingdom, and all her chiefs will cease to be. 13. And in her palaces shall come up thorns, nettles, and brambles in her fortresses; and she shall be a home of wolves, a grass-plot for ostriches. 14. And wild creatures shall (there) meet with howling creatures, and the shaggy monster shall call to his fellow; only there reposes the night-monster, and finds for herself a resting-place. 15. [As to the particular species of animals referred to in this whole passage, there is no need, as Calvin well observes, of troubling ourselves much about them. The general sense evidently is, that a human population should be succeeded by wild and lonely animals, who should not only live but breed there, implying total and continued desolation.] 16. Seek ye out of the book of Jehovah and read; by number will Jehovah call them. For my mouth, it has commanded; and His Spirit it has gathered them. 17. He too has cast the let for them, and His hand has divided it to them by line. For ever shall they hold it as a heritage, to all generations they shall dwell therein.

XXXV.—1. Desert and waste shall rejoice (for) them; and the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. 2. (It shall) blossom, it shall blossom and rejoice; yea (with) joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon is given unto it, the beauty of Carmel and of Sharon. They shall see the glory of Jehovah, the beauty of our God.

3. Strengthen hands (now) sinking, and knees (now) tottering make firm. 4. Say ye to the hasty of heart, Be firm, fear not; behold your God; vengeance is coming, the retribution of God; He (Himself) is coming, and will save you.

5. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6. Then shall the lame bound as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall shout (for joy), because waters have burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

6. And the mirage shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water, (even) in the haunt of wolves, their lair, a court for reeds and rushes. 8. And there shall be there a highway and a way; it shall be called the Way of Holiness; and there shall not pass through it an unclean (thing or person); it shall be for them; the travellers, yea, those who are ignorant (or foolish) shall not be able to go astray. 9. There shall not be there a lion, and a ravenous beast shall not ascend it, nor be found there; and (there) shall walk redeemed (ones).

10. And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return and come to Zion with shouting, and everlasting joy upon their head; gladness and joy shall overtake (them), and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

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night it is not quenched; the smoke of Edom goes up for ever: it lies waste from generation to generation; no one passes through it for ever and ever. 11. And pelican and hedgehog take possession of it, and eared-owl and raven dwell there; and He stretched over it the measure of Tohu and the level of Bohu. 12. Its nobles—there is no longer a monarchy which they elected; and all its princes come to nought. 13. And the palaces of Edom break out into thorns, nettles and thistles in the castles; and it becomes the abode of wild dogs, pasture for ostriches. 14. And martens meet with jackals, and a wood-devil runs upon its fellow; yea, Lilith dwells there, and finds rest for itself. 15. There the arrow-snake makes its nest, and breeds and lays eggs, and broods in the shadow there; yea, there vultures gather one to another. 16. Search in the book of Jehovah, and read! Not one of the creatures fails, not one misses the other: for my mouth—it has commanded it; and His breath—it has brought them together. 17. And He has cast the lots for them, and His hand has assigned it (this land) to them by measure; they will possess it for ever; to generation and generation they will dwell therein.

XXXV.—1. Gladness fills the desert and the heath; and the steppe rejoices, and flowers like the crocus. 2. It flowers abundantly, and rejoices; yea, rejoicing and singing: the glory of Lebanon is given to it, the splendour of Carmel and the plain of Sharon; they will see the glory of Jehovah, the splendour of our God.

3. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and make the trembling knees strong. 4. Say to those of a terrified heart, Be strong, Fear ye not! Behold, your God will come for vengeance, for a divine retribution: He will come, and bring you salvation. 5. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6. Then will the lame man leap as the stag, and the tongue of the dumb man shout; for waters break out in the desert, and brooks in the steppe. 7. And the mirage becomes a fish-pond, and the thirsty ground gushing water-springs; in the place of jackals, where it lies, there springs up grass with reeds and rushes.

8. And a highway rises there, and a road, and it will be called the Holy Road; no unclean man will pass along it, as it is appointed for them: whoever walks the road, even simple ones do not go astray. 9. There will be no lion there, and the most ravenous beast of prey will not approach it, will not be met with there; and redeemed ones walk. 10. And the ransomed of Jehovah will return, and come to Zion with shouting, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they lay hold of gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing flee away.

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HISTORICAL APPENDIX TO THE FIRST PART OF ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES.—CHAPS. XXXVI.–XXXIX.

XXXVI.—1. And it came to pass in the fourteenth year of the king Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. 2. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, to king Hezekiah, with a strong force, and he stood by the aqueduct of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field. 3. Then there came forth Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, who was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.

4. And Rabshakeh said to them: Say now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What is this confidence which thou confidest in? 5. I say, mere word of lips (is your) counsel and strength for the war; now on whom hast thou confided, that thou hast rebelled against me? 6. Behold, thou hast trusted in the support of this broken reed, in Egypt, which, (if) a man lean upon it, will go into his hand and pierce it; so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all those trusting in him. 7. And if thou say to me, We trust in Jehovah our God; is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, Before this altar shall ye worship? 8. And now, engage, I pray thee, with my lord the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 9. And how wilt thou turn away the face of one governor of the least of my master's servants? So hast thou reposed thyself on Egypt, with respect to chariots and horses. 10. And now (is it) without Jehovah I have come up against this land to destroy it? Jehovah said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it.

11. Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Pray speak unto thy servants in Aramean, for we understand (it), and speak not unto us in Jewish, in the ears of the people who (are) on the wall.

12. And Rabshakeh said: Is it to thy master and to thee that my master sent me to speak these words? Is it not to the men sitting on the wall to eat their own dung and to drink their own water with you?

13. Then Rabshakeh stood and called with a loud voice in Jewish, and said, Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. 14. Thus saith the king: Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. 15. And let not Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah, saying, Jehovah will certainly save us, this city shall not be given up

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PART VII.

FULFILMENTS OF PROPHECY; AND PROPHECIES BELONGING TO THE FOURTEENTH YEAR OF HEZEKIAH'S REIGN, AND THE TIMES IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING. — CHAPS. XXXVI.–XXXIX.

A.—First Assyrian attempt to compel the surrender of Jerusalem.—CHAPS. XXXVI.–XXXVII. 7.

XXXVI.—1. And it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hizkiyahu, Sancherîb, king of Asshur, came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them. 2. Then the king of Asshur sent Rabshakeh from Lachish towards Jerusalem to king Hizkiyahu with a great army, and he advanced to the conduit of the upper pool by the road of the fuller's field; 3, and there went out to him Eliakim, son of Hilkiyahu, the house-minister, and Shebna the chancellor, and Joah, son of Asaph the recorder.

4. And Rabshakeh said to them, Say now to Hizkiyahu, Thus saith the great king, the king of Asshur, What sort of confidence is this that thou hast got? 5. I say, Vain talk is counsel and strength for war: now, then, in whom dost thou trust, that thou hast rebelled against me? 6. Behold, thou trustest in this broken reed-staff there, in Egypt, on which one leans, and it runs into his hand and pierces it; so does Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. 7. But if thou sayest to me, We trust in Jehovah our God; is it not He whose high places and altars Hizkiyahu has removed, and has said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before the altar? 8. And now take a wager with my lord the king of Asshur; I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou art able for thy part to give horsemen upon them. 9. And how couldst thou repel the advance of a single satrap among the least of the servants of my lord? Thou puttest thy trust then in Egypt for chariots and riders! 10. And now have I come up without Jehovah against this land to destroy it? Jehovah said to me, Go up to this land, and destroy it.

11. Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah, to Rabshakeh, Pray, speak to thy servants in Aramæan, for we understand it; and do not speak to us in Jewish, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

12. Then Rabshakeh said to them, Has my lord sent me to thy lord and to thee, not rather to the men who sit upon the wall, to eat their dung, and to drink their urine together with you?

13. Then Rabshakeh went near, and cried with a loud voice in the Jewish language, and said, Hear the words of the great king, the king of Asshur. 14. Thus saith the king, Let not Hizkiyahu practise deception upon you; for he cannot deliver you. 15. And let not Hizkiyahu feed you with hope in Jehovah, saying, Jehovah will deliver, yea,

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into the hand of the king of Assyria. 16. Hearken not to Hezekiah, for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make with me a blessing, and come out unto me, and eat ye (every) man his own vine and (every) man his own fig-tree, and drink ye (every) man the waters of his own cistern; 17, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18. Let not Hezekiah seduce you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Have the gods of the nations delivered every one his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19. Where (are) the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where the gods of Sepharvaim? and (when or where was it) that they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20. Who (are they) among all the gods of these lands that have delivered their land out of my hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

21. And they held their peace, and did not answer him a word, for such was the commandment of the king, Ye shall not answer him.

22. Then came Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, who (was) over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder, unto Hezekiah, with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

XXXVII.—1. And it came to pass when king Hezekiah heard, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah. 2. And he sent Eliakim who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the people covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the son of Amoz, the prophet. 3. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, A day of anguish and rebuke and contempt (is) this day, for the children are come to the places of birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. 4. If peradventure Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard, then shalt thou lift up a prayer for the remnant (that is still) found (here).

5. And the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6. And Isaiah said to them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, (with) which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7. Behold, I am putting a spirit in him, and he shall hear a noise, and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8. And Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he heard that he had decamped from Lachish.

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deliver us: this city will not be delivered into the hand of the king of Asshur. 16. Hearken not to Hizkiyahu; for thus saith the king of Asshur, Enter into a connection of mutual good wishes with me, and come out to me: and enjoy every one his vine, and every one his fig-tree, and drink every one the water of his cistern: 17, till I come and take you away into a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread-corn and vineyards; 18, that Hizkiyahu do not befool you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Have the gods of the nations delivered every one his land out of the hand of the king of Asshur? 19. Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where the gods of Sepharvayim? and how much less have they delivered that Samaria out of my hand? 20. Who were they among all the gods of these lands who delivered their land out of my hand? how much less will Jehovah deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

21. But they held their peace, and answered him not a word; for it was the king's commandment, Ye shall not answer him.

22. Then came Eliakim, son of Hilkiyahu, the house-minister, and Shebna the chancellor, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder, to Hizkiyahu, with torn clothes, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

XXXVII.—1. And it came to pass, when king Hizkiyahu had heard, he rent his clothes, and wrapped himself in mourning linen, and went into the house of Jehovah. 2. And sent Eliakim the house-minister, and Shebna the chancellor, and the eldest of the priests, wrapped in mourning linen, to Isaiah son of Amoz, the prophet. 3. And they say to him, Thus saith Hizkiyahu, A day of affliction, and punishment, and blasphemy is this day; for children are come to the matrix, and there is no strength to bring them forth. 4. Perhaps Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, with which the king of Asshur his lord has sent him to revile the living God; and Jehovah thy God will punish for the words He hath heard, and thou wilt make intercession for the remnant that still exists.

5. And the servants of king Hizkiyahu came to Isaiah. 6. And Isaiah said to them, Speak thus to your lord, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Asshur have blasphemed Me. 7. Behold, I will bring a spirit upon him, and he will hear a hearsay, and return to his own land; and I will cut him down with the sword in his own land.

B.—Second attempt of the Assyrians to force the surrender of Jerusalem. Its miraculous deliverance.—CHAP. XXXVII. 8–38.

8. Rabshakeh thereupon returned, and found the king of Asshur warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he had with-

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9. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee; and he heard (it), and sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10, Thus shall ye say to Hezekiah, king of Judah, Let not thy God deceive thee, in whom thou trustest, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, by utterly destroying them, and thou shalt be delivered? 12. Did the gods of the nations deliver them, which my fathers destroyed, (to wit) Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which is in Telassar? 13. Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city Sepharvaim, Henah, and Ivvah?

14. And Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it, and went up (to) the house of Jehovah, and Hezekiah spread it before Jehovah. 15. And Hezekiah prayed to Jehovah, saying, 16, Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, dwelling between the cherubim, Thou art He, the God, Thou alone, to all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made the heavens and the earth. 17. Bow down Thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open Thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent to reproach the living God. 18. It is true, O Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have wasted all the lands and their land, 19, and given their gods into the fire—for they (were) no gods, but wood and stone, the work of men's hands—and destroyed them. 20. And now, O Jehovah, our God, save us from his hand, and all the kingdoms of the earth shall know that Thou alone art Jehovah.

21. And Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, (as to) what thou hast prayed to me (with respect to) Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22, this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken against him, The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee, she hath laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head after thee. 23. Whom hast thou reproached and reviled, and against whom hast thou raised (thy) voice, and lifted thine eyes (on) high towards the Holy One of Israel? 24. By the hand of thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord and said, With the multitude of my chariots I have ascended the height of mountains, the sides of Lebanon, and I will cut down the loftiness of its cedars and the choice of its firs, and I will reach its extreme height, its garden-forest. 25. I have digged and drunk water, and I will dry up with the sole of my feet all the streams of Egypt. 26. Hast thou not heard? From afar I have done it, from the days of old, and formed it, now I have caused it to come, and it shall be, to lay waste, (as) desolate heaps, fortified cities. 27. And their inhabitants are short of hand; they are broken and confounded; they are grass of the field and green

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drawn from Lachish. 9. And he had heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, he has come out to make war against thee; and heard, and sent messengers to Hizkiyahu, saying, 10, Thus shall ye say to Hizkiyahu king of Judah, saying, Let not the God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Asshur. 11. Behold, thou hast surely heard what the kings of Asshur have done to all lands, to lay the ban upon them; and thou, thou shouldest be delivered? 12. Have the gods of the nations, which my fathers destroyed, delivered them? Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the Bnē-'Eden, which are in Telassar? 13. Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of 'Ir-Sepharvaim, Hen'a, and 'Ivah?

14. And Hizkiyahu took the letter out of the hand of the messengers, and read it, and went up to the house of Jehovah; and Hizkiyahu spread it before Jehovah. 15. And Hizkiyahu prayed to Jehovah, saying, 16, Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned upon the cherubim, Thou, yea Thou alone, art God of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth. 17. Incline Thine ear, Jehovah, and hear! Open Thine eyes, Jehovah, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent to despise the living God! 18. Truly, O Jehovah, the kings of Asshur have laid waste all lands, and their land, 19, and have put their gods into the fire: for they were not gods, only the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. 20. And now, Jehovah our God, help us out of his hand, and all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou Jehovah art it alone.

21. And Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hizkiyahu, saying, Thus saith Jehovah the God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me concerning Sennacherib the king of Asshur: 22, This is the utterance which Jehovah utters concerning him:—The virgin daughter of Zion despiseth thee, laugheth thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem shaketh her head after thee. 23. Whom hast thou reviled and blasphemed, and over whom hast thou spoken loftily, that thou hast lifted up thine eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. 24. By thy servants hast thou reviled the Lord, in that thou sayest, "With the multitude of my chariots have I climbed the height of the mountains, the inner side of Lebanon; and I shall fell the lofty growth of its cedars, the choice of its cypresses; and I shall penetrate to the height of its uttermost border, the grove of its orchard. 25. I, I have digged and drank waters, and will make dry with the sole of my feet all the Nile-arms." 26. Hast thou not heard? I have done it long ago, from the days of ancient time have I formed it, and now brought it to pass, that thou shouldest lay waste fortified cities into desolate stone heaps; 27, and their inhabitants, powerless,

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herbage, grass of the house-tops and a field before the stalk. 28. And thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, I have known, and thy raging against me. 29. Because of thy raging against me, and (because) thy arrogance has come up into my ears, I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will cause thee to return by the way by which thou camest.

30. And this to thee, the sign: eat, the (present) year, that which groweth of itself, and the second year that which springeth of the same, and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. 31. And the escaped of the house of Jacob, that is left, shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward; 32, for out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and an escape from Mount Zion; the zeal of Jehovah of hosts shall do this.

33. Therefore thus saith Jehovah (with respect) to the king of Assyria, He shall not come to this city, and shall not shoot an arrow there, and shall not come before it with a shield, and shall not cast up a mound against it. 34. By the way that he came shall he return, and to this city shall he not come, saith Jehovah. 35. And I will cover over this city, (so as) to save it, for my own sake, and for the sake of David my servant.

36. And the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of Assyria an hundred and eighty and five thousand, and they rose early in the morning and behold all of them were dead corpses. 37. Then decamped, and departed, and returned, Sennacherib king of Assyria, and dwelt in Nineveh. 38. And he was worshipping (in) the house of Nisroch his god, and Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat, and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

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were terrified, and were put to shame: became herb of the field and green of the turf, herb of the house-tops, and a cornfield before the blades. 28. And thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy entering in, I know; and thy heating thyself against me. 29. On account of thy heating thyself against me, and because thy self-confidence has risen up into mine ears, I put my ring into thy nose, and my muzzle into thy lips, and lead thee back by the way by which thou hast come.

30. And let this be a sign to thee, Men eat this year what is self-sown; and in the second year what springs from the roots; and in the third year they sow and reap and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 31. And that which is escaped of the house of Judah, that which remains will again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. 32. For from Jerusalem will a remnant go forth, and a fugitive from Mount Zion; the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will carry this out.

33. Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Asshur, He will not enter into this city, nor shoot off an arrow there; nor do they assault it with a shield, nor cast up earthworks against it. 34. By the way by which he came will he return; and he will not enter into this city, saith Jehovah. 35. And I shield this city, to help, for mine own sake, and for the sake of David my servant.

36. Then the angel of Jehovah went forth and smote in the camp of Asshur a hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when men rose up in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. 37. Then Sennacherib king of Asshur decamped, and went forth and returned, and settled down in Nineveh. 38. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharazer his sons smote him with the sword; and when they escaped to the land of Ararat, Esar-haddon reigned in his stead.

C.—Hezekiah's illness. Isaiah assures him of his recovery.—CHAP. XXXVIII.

XXXVIII.—1. In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death, and Isaiah the son of Amoz, the prophet, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, Order thy house, for thou (art) dying, and art not to live. 2. And Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to Jehovah. 3. And he said, Ah, Jehovah, remember, I beseech thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and that which is good in Thine eyes have I done; and Hezekiah wept a great weeping.

4. And the word of Jehovah came to Isaiah, saying, 5, Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold, I am adding unto thy days fifteen years. 6. And out of the hand of the king of Assyria I will save thee and this city, and I will cover over this city.

1. In those days Hizkiyahu became dangerously ill. And Isaiah son of Amoz, the prophet, came to him, and said to him, Thus saith Jehovah, Set thine house in order; for thou wilt die, and not recover. 2. Then Hizkiyahu turned his face to the wall, and prayed to Jehovah, 3, and said, O Jehovah, remember this, I pray, that I have walked before Thee in truth, and with the whole heart, and have done what was good in Thine eyes. And Hizkiyahu wept with loud weeping.

4. And it came to pass the word of Jehovah came to Isaiah as follows: 5, Go and say to Hizkiyahu, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thine ancestor, I have heard thy prayer, seen thy tears; behold, I add to thy days fifteen years. 6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Asshur, and will defend this city.

[21. Then Isaiah said they were to bring

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7. And this shall be to thee the sign from Jehovah, that Jehovah will perform this word which He hath spoken: 8. Behold, I am causing the shadow to go back, the degrees which it has gone down on the degrees of Ahaz with the sun, ten degrees backward; and the sun returned ten degrees on the degrees which it had gone down.

9. A writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he was sick, and recovered from his sickness:—

10. I said in the pause of my days, I shall go into the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years. 11. I said I shall not see Jah, Jah in the land of the living; I shall not behold man again with the inhabitants of the world. 12. My dwelling is plucked up and uncovered by me like a shepherd's tent. I have rolled up, like the weaver, my life: from the thrum He will cut me off; from day to night Thou wilt finish me.

13. I set (Him before me) till the morning as a lion (saying), So will He break all my bones; from day to night Thou wilt make an end of me. 14. Like a swallow (or) like a twittering sparrow, so I chirp; I moan like a dove; my eyes are weak (with looking) upward; O Jehovah, I am oppressed, undertake for me.

15. What shall I say? He hath both spoken to me, and Himself hath done (it); I shall go softly all my days in the bitterness of my soul. 16. Lord, upon them they live, and as to everything in them is the life of my spirit, and Thou wilt recover me and make me to live. 17. Behold to peace (is turned) my bitter bitterness, and Thou hast loosed my soul from the pit of destruction, because Thou hast cast behind Thy back all my sins.

18. For the grave shall not confess Thee (nor) death praise Thee; they that go down to the pit shall not hope for Thy truth. 19. The living, the living, he shall thank Thee, as I do to-day; fathers to sons shall make known with respect to Thy truth. 20. Jehovah (hastened) to save me! And my songs we will play, all the days of our life, at the house of Jehovah.

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a fig-cake; and they plaistered the boil, and he recovered. 22. And Hizkiyahu said, What sign is there that I shall go up to the house of Jehovah?]

7. And let this be the sign to thee on the part of Jehovah, that Jehovah will perform the word which He has spoken: 8, Behold, I make the shadow retrace the steps, which it has gone down upon the sun-dial of Ahaz through the sun, ten steps backward. And the sun went back ten steps upon the dial, which it had gone down.

9. Writing of Hizkiyahu king of Judah, when he was sick, and recovered from his sickness.

10, 11:—
I said, in quiet of my days shall I depart into the gates of Hades:
I am mulcted of the rest of my years.
I said, I shall not see Jah, Jah, in the land of the living:
I shall behold man no more, with the inhabitants of the regions of the dead.
My home is broken up, and is carried off from me like a shepherd's tent:
I rolled up my life like a weaver; He would have cut me loose from the roll:
From day to night Thou makest an end of me.

13, 14:—
I waited patiently till the morning; like the lion,
So will He break in pieces all my bones:
From day to night Thou makest it all over with me.
Like a swallow, a crane, so I chirped;
I cooed like the dove:
Mine eyes pined for the height.
O Lord, men assault me! Be bail for me.

15–17:—
What shall I say, That He promised me, and He hath carried it out:
I should walk quietly all my years, on the trouble of my soul?
O Lord, by such things men revive, and the life of my spirit is always therein:
And so wilt Thou restore me, and make me to live!
Behold, bitterness became salvation to me, bitterness;
And Thou, Thou hast delivered my soul in love out of the pit of corruption:
For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.

18–20:—
For Hades does not praise Thee; death does not sing praises to Thee:
They that sink into the grave do not hope for Thy truth.
The living, the living, he praises Thee, as I do to-day;
The father to the children makes known Thy truth.

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21. And Isaiah said, Let him take a lump of figs, and lay them softened on the boil, and he shall live. 22. And Hezekiah said, What sign (is there) that I shall go up (to) the house of Jehovah?

XXXIX.—1. In that time, Merodach Baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, and he heard that he was sick and was recovered.

2. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them his house of rarities, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the ointment, and all his house of arms, and all that was found in his treasures; there was not a thing which Hezekiah did not show them, in his house, and in all his dominion.

3. Then came Isaiah the prophet to the king Hezekiah, and said to him, What said these men, and whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, From a far country came they unto me, from Babylon. 4. And he said, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah said, All that is in my house have they seen; there is not a thing that I have not showed them in my treasures.

5. And Isaiah said, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts, 6, Behold days are coming when all that (is) in thy house, and that which thy fathers have hoarded until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; there shall not be left a thing, saith Jehovah. 7. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

8. And Hezekiah said, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. And he said, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

XL.—[A glorious change awaits the Church, consisting in a new and gracious manifestation of Jehovah's presence, for which His people are exhorted to prepare, vers. 1–5. Though one generation perish after another, this promise shall eventually be fulfilled, because it rests not upon human but divine authority, vers. 6–8. Zion may even now see Him approaching as the conqueror of His enemies, and at the same time as the shepherd of His people, vers. 9–11. The fulfilment of these pledges is insured by His infinite wisdom, His Almighty power, and His independence both of individuals and nations, vers. 12–17. How much more is He superior to material images, by which men represent Him or supply His place, vers. 18–25. The same power which supports the heavens is pledged for the support of Israel, vers. 26–31.]

1. Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. 2. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received from the hand of Jehovah double for all her sins. 3. A voice crying—in the wilderness—Clear the way of

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Jehovah is ready to give me salvation;
Therefore will we play my stringed instruments all the days of my life
In the house of Jehovah.

D.—Threatening of the Babylonish captivity occasioned by Hezekiah.—CHAP. XXXIX.

1. At that time Merodach Bal'adan, son of Bal'adan king of Babel, sent writings and a present to Hizkiyahu, and heard that he had been sick, and was restored again.

2. And Hizkiyahu rejoiced concerning them, and showed them all his storehouse: the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the fine oil, and all his arsenal, and all that was in his treasures: there was nothing that Hizkiyahu had not shown them in all his house or in all his kingdom.

3. Then came Isaiah the prophet to king Hizkiyahu, and said to him, What have these men said, and whence came they to thee? Hizkiyahu said, They came to me from a far country, out of Babel. 4. He said further, What have they seen in thy house? Hizkiyahu said, All that is in my house have they seen: there was nothing in my treasures that I had not shown them. 5. Then Isaiah said to Hizkiyahu, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts; 6, Behold, days come, that all that is in thy house, and all that thy fathers have laid up unto this day, will be carried away to Babel: nothing will be left behind, saith Jehovah. 7. And of thy children that proceed from thee, whom thou shalt beget, will they take; and they will be courtiers in the palace of the king of Babel. 8. Then said Hizkiyahu to Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. And he said further, Yea, there shall be peace and steadfastness in my days.

SECOND HALF OF THE COLLECTION, CHAPS. XL.–LXVI.

PART I.

FIRST PROPHECY.—CHAP. XL.

Words of Comfort, and the God of Comfort.

1. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her affliction is ended, that her debt is paid, that she has received from the hand of Jehovah double for all her sins.

3. Hark, a crier! In the wilderness prepare ye a way for Jehovah, make smooth in the

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Jehovah—make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4. Every valley shall be raised, and every mountain and hill brought low, and the uneven shall become level, and the ridges a plain. 5. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see (it) together, for the mouth of Jehovah speaks.

6. A voice saying, Cry! And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its favour like the flower of the field! 7. Dried is the grass, faded is the flower; for the breath of Jehovah has blown upon it. Surely the people is grass. 8. Dried is the grass, faded the flower, and the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9. Upon a high mountain, get thee up, bringer of good news, O Zion! Raise with strength thy voice, bringer of good news, Jerusalem! Raise (it), fear not; say to the towns of Judah, Lo, your God! 10. Lo, the Lord Jehovah is coming in (the person of) a strong one, and His arm (is) ruling for Him. Lo, His hire is with Him, and His wages before Him. 11. Like a shepherd His flock will He feed, with His arm will He gather the lambs, and in His bosom carry (them): the nursing (ewes) He will (gently) lead.

12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended in a measure the dust of the earth, and weighed in a balance the mountains, and the hills in scales? 13. Who hath measured the Spirit of Jehovah, and (who, as) the man of His counsel, will teach Him? 14. Whom did He consult, and he made Him understand, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and the way of understanding (who) will make Him know? 15. Lo, nations are as a drop from a bucket, and as dust on scales are reckoned; lo, islands as an atom He will take up. 16. And Lebanon is not enough for burning, and its beasts are not enough for a sacrifice. 17. All the nations (are) as nothing before Him, less than nothing and vanity are counted to Him.

18. And (now) to whom will ye liken God, and what likeness will ye compare to Him? 19. The image a carver has wrought, and a gilder with gold shall overlay it, and chains of silver (he is) casting. 20. (As for) the man impoverished (by) offering, a tree (that) will not rot He chooses, a wise carver He seeks for it, to set up an image (that) shall not be moved. 21. Will you not know? Will you not hear? has it not been told you from the first? have you not understood (from) the foundations of the earth? 22. The (One) sitting over the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants (are) as locusts; the One spreading like an awning the heavens, and He stretches

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desert a road for our God. 4. Let every valley be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; and let the rugged be made a plain, and the ledges of rock a valley. 5. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh seeth together: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

6. Hark, one speaking, Cry! And he answers, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its beauty as the flower of the field. 7. Grass is withered, flower faded, for the breath of Jehovah has blown upon it. Surely grass is the people; 8. grass withereth, flower fadeth: yet the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9. Upon a high mountain get thee up, O evangelistess Zion;* lift up thy voice with strength, evangelistess Jerusalem! lift up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God.

10. Behold, the Lord Jehovah as a mighty one will He come! His arm ruling for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His retribution before Him. 11. He will feed His flock like a shepherd, take the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are giving suck.

12. Who hath measured the waters with the hollow of his hand, and regulated the heavens with a span, and taken up the dust of the earth in a third measure, and weighed the mountains with a steelyard, and hills with balances? 13. Who regulated the Spirit of Jehovah, and (who) instructed Him as His counsellor? 14. With whom took He counsel, and who would have explained to Him and instructed Him concerning the path of right, and taught Him knowledge, and made known to Him a prudent course?

15. Behold, nations like a little drop on a bucket, and like a grain of sand in a balance, are they esteemed; behold, islands like an atom of dust that rises in the air. 16. And Lebanon is not a sufficiency of burning, nor its game a sufficiency of burnt-offerings. 17. All the nations are as nothing before Him; they are regarded by Him as belonging to nullity and emptiness. 18. And to whom can ye liken God, and what kind of image can ye place beside Him!

19. The idol, when the smith has cast it, the melter plates it with gold, and melteth silver chains for it. 20. The man who is impoverished in oblations, he chooseth a block of wood that will not rot; he seeketh for himself a skilful smith, to prepare an idol that will not shake.

21. Do ye not know? Do ye not hear? Is it not proclaimed to you from the beginning? Have ye not obtained an insight into the foundations of the earth? 22. He who is enthroned above the vault of the earth, and

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*** 9. O thou that bringest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain! lift up thy voice with strength, O thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem! lift it up, &c.—*Birks and Kay.***

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them out like a tent to dwell in; 23, the One bringing princes to nothing, the judges of the earth like emptiness He has made. 24. Not even planted were they, not even sown, not even rooted in the ground their stock, and He just breathed upon them, and they withered, and a whirlwind like the chaff shall take them up. 25. And now to (whom) will ye liken me, and to (whom) shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26. Lift up on high your eyes and see—who hath created these?—and who is the (One) bringing out by number their host?—to all of them by name will He call—from abundance of might and because strong in power—not one faileth. 27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and why (thus) speak, O Israel? Hidden is my way from Jehovah, and from my God my cause will pass away. 28. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The God of eternity, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, will not faint, and will not tire; there is no search (with respect) to His understanding. 29. Giving to the weary strength, and to the powerless might will He increase. 30. And (yet) weary shall youths be and faint, and chosen (youths) shall be weakened, be weakened. 31. And (on the other hand) those waiting for Jehovah shall gain new strength; they shall raise the pinion like the eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

XLI.—[Until the ends of Israel's national existence are accomplished, that existence must continue in spite of hostile nations and their gods, who shall all perish sooner than the chosen people, vers. 1–16. However feeble Israel may be in himself, Jehovah will protect him, and raise up the necessary instruments for his deliverance and triumph.]

1. Be silent to me, O islands, and the nations shall gain new strength; they shall approach, then shall they speak, together to the judgment-seat will we draw near. 2. Who hath raised up from the east? Righteousness shall call him to its foot; it shall give nations before him, and cause him to tread upon kings; it shall give (them) as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. 3. He shall pursue them; he shall pass (in) safety; a path with his feet he shall not go. 4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I Jehovah, the first and with the last, I (am) He.

5. The isles have seen it and are afraid, the ends of the earth tremble; they have approached and come. 6. A man his neighbour they will help, and to his brother (one) will say, Be strong! 7. And the carver has strengthened the gilder, the smoother with the hammer, the smiter on the anvil; he says

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its inhabitants resemble grasshoppers; who has spread out the heavens like gauze, and stretched them out like a tent-roof to dwell in; 23. He who giveth up rulers; maketh judges of the earth like a desolation. 24. They are hardly planted, hardly sown, their stem has hardly taken root in the earth, and He only blows upon them, and they dry up, and the storm carries them away like stubble.

25. And to whom will ye compare me, to whom can I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26. Lift* up your eyes on high, and see; who hath created these things? It is He who bringeth out their host by number, calleth them all by names, because of the greatness of (His) might, and as being strong in power: there is not one that is missing.

27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hidden from Jehovah, and my right hand is overlooked by my God? 28. Is it not known to thee, or hast thou not heard, an eternal God is Jehovah, Creator of the ends of the earth? He fainteth not, neither becomes weary; His understanding is unsearchable. 29. Giving power to the faint, and to the incapable He giveth strength in abundance. 30. And youths grow faint and weary, and young men suffer a fall. 31. But they who wait for Jehovah gain fresh strength; lift up their wings like eagles; run, and are not weary; go forward, and do not faint.

SECOND PROPHECY.—CHAP. XLI.

The God of the World's History, and of Prophecy.

1. Be silent to me, ye islands; and let the nations procure fresh strength: let them come near, then speak; we will enter into contest together.

2. Who hath raised up the man from the rising of the sun, whom justice meets at his foot, He giveth up nations before him, and kings He subdues, giveth men like dust to his sword, and like driven stubble to his bow? 3. He pursueth them, and marcheth in peace by a course which he never trod with his foot. 4. Who hath wrought and executed it? He who calleth the generations of men from the beginning, I Jehovah am first, and with the last one am I HE. 5. Islands have seen it and shuddered; the ends of the earth trembled; they have approached, and drawn near. 6. One helped his companion, and he said to his brother, Only firm! 7. The caster put firmness into the melter, the hammer-smoother into the anvil-smiter, saying of the

* Lift up your eyes unto the heavens, and behold! who hath created these things? He bringeth out their host by number, He calleth them all by names; by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power, not one faileth.—*Matthew Arnold.*

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of the solder, It is good; and he sharpeneth it with nails; it shall not be moved. 8. And thou Israel my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend; 9, thou whom I have grasped from the ends of the earth, and from its sides have I called thee, My servant (art) thou; I have chosen thee, and not rejected thee.

10. Fear thou not, for I (am) with thee; look not around, for I (am) thy God; I have strengthened thee, yea, I have helped thee, yea, I have upheld thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11. Lo, ashamed and confounded shall be all those inflamed against thee; they shall be as though they were not, and destroyed shall be they that strive with thee. 12. Thou shalt seek them and not find them, the men of quarrel; they shall be as nothing and as nought, thy men of war. 13. For I, Jehovah thy God, (am) holding fast thy right hand; the (one) saying to thee, Fear not, I have helped thee. 14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I have helped thee, saith Jehovah, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. 15. Behold I have placed thee for a threshing-sledge, sharp, new, possessed of teeth; thou shalt thresh mountains and beat (them) small, and hills like the chaff shalt thou make. 16. Thou shalt fan them, and a wind shall take them up, and a whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt joy in Jehovah, and in the Holy One of Israel shalt thou boast.

17. The suffering and the poor (are) seeking water, and it is not; their tongue with thirst is parched. I Jehovah will answer them, (I) the God of Israel will not forsake them. 18. I will open upon bare hills streams, and in the midst of valleys fountains; I will convert the desert into a pool of water, and the dry land into springs of water. 19. I will give in the wilderness cedar, acacia, and myrtle, and oil tree; I will place in the desert fir, pine, and box together. 20. That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of Jehovah hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

21. Present your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forward your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22. Let them bring forward and show forth to us the (things) which are to happen; the former things, what they were, show forth, and we will set our heart, and know the issue; or (else) the coming events make us to hear. 23. Show forth the (things) to come hereafter, and we will know that ye are gods; yes, ye shall do good or evil, and we will look about and see together. 24. Lo, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you. 25. I have raised up (one) from the north, and he has come; from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name; and he shall come upon

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soldering, It is good; and made him firm with nails, that he should not shake.

8. And* thou, Israel my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham my friend;† 9, thou whom I have laid hold of from the ends of the earth, and called from the corners thereof, and said to Thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen and not despised thee, 10, fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not afraid, for I am thy God: I have chosen thee, I also help thee, I also hold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee must be ashamed and confounded; the men of thy conflict become as nothing, and perish. 12. Thou wilt seek them, and not find them, the men of thy feuds; the men of thy warfare become as nothing, and nonentity. 13. For I, Jehovah thy God, lay hold of thy right hand, He who saith to thee, Fear not, I will help thee.

14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and handful‡ Israel: I will help thee, saith Jehovah; and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. 15. Behold, I have made thee a threshing roller, a sharp new one, with double edges; thou wilt thresh mountains, and pound them; and hills thou wilt make chaff. 16. Thou wilt winnow them, and wind carries them away, and tempest scatters them; and thou wilt rejoice in Jehovah, and glory in the Holy One of Israel.

17. The poor and needy, who seek for water and there is none, their tongue faints for thirst. I Jehovah will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. 18. I open streams upon hills of the field, and springs in the midst of valleys; I make the desert into a pond, and dry land into fountains of water. 19. I give in the desert cedars, acacias, and myrtles, and oleasters; I set on the steppe cypresses, plane-trees, sherbin-trees together, 20, that they may see, and know, and lay to heart, and understand all together, that the hand of Jehovah hath accomplished it, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

21. Bring hither your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forward your proofs, saith the King of Jacob. 22. Let them bring forward, and make known to us what will happen; make known the beginning, what it is, and we will fix our heart upon it, and take knowledge of its issue; or let us hear what is to come 23. Make known to us what is coming later and we will acknowledge that ye are gods! yea, do good, and do evil, and we will measure ourselves, and see together.

25. I have raised up from the north, and he came: from the rising of the sun one who invokes my name; and he treads upon satraps as mud, and like a potter kneadeth clay.

* But, &c.—*Birks.* † Abraham that loved me.—*Kay.*
‡ And ye mortals of Israel.—*Birks.*

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princes as upon mortar, and as a potter treadeth clay. 26. Who hath declared from the beginning? (Say) and we will know; and beforehand, and we will say, True! Nay, there was none that told; nay, there was none that uttered; nay, there was none that heard your words. 27. (I am the) first (to say) to Zion, Behold, behold them! and (to give) to Jerusalem a bringer of good news. 28. And I will look, but there is no man; and of these, but there is no one advising; and I will ask them, and (perhaps) they will return an answer. 29. Lo, they (are) all nought, nothing their words, wind and emptiness their molten images.

XLII.—[This chapter exhibits to our view the servant of Jehovah, *i.e.*, the Messiah and His people, as a complex person, and as the messenger or representative of God among the nations. His mode of operation is described, vers. 1–4. The effects of His influence are represented as not natural but spiritual, vers. 5–9. The power of God is pledged for His success, notwithstanding all appearance of inaction or indifference on His part, vers. 10–17. In the latter portion of the chapter, the Church or Body of Christ, as distinguished from its Head, and representing Him until He came, is charged with unfaithfulness to its great trust, and this unfaithfulness declared to be the cause of what it suffered, vers. 18–25.]

1. Behold my servant! I will hold Him fast; my chosen One, (in whom) my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon Him; judgment to the nations shall He cause to go forth. 2. He shall not cry, and He shall not raise (His voice), and He shall not let His voice be heard in the street. 3. A bruised reed shall He not break, and a dim wick will He not quench; by the truth He will bring forth judgment. 4. He shall not be dim, and He shall not be crushed, until He shall set judgment in the earth, and for His law the isles shall wait.

5. Thus saith the mighty (God), Jehovah, creating the heavens and stretching them out, spreading the earth and its issues, giving breath to the people on it, and spirit to those walking in it. 6. I, Jehovah, have called Thee in righteousness, and will lay hold of Thy hand, and will keep Thee, and will give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, 7, to open blind eyes, to bring out from prison the boudman, from the house of confinement the dwellers in darkness. 8. I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory to another will I not give, and my praise to graven images. 9. The former things—lo, they have come, and new things I (am) telling; before they spring forth I will let you hear (them).

10. Sing to Jehovah a new song, His praise

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26. Who hath made it known from the beginning, we will acknowledge it, and from former time, we will say He is in the right! Yea, there was none that made known; yea, none that caused to hear; yea, none that heard your words. 27. As at the first I said to Zion,* Behold, behold, there it is; and I bestow evangelists upon Jerusalem. 28. And I looked, and there was no man; and of these there was no one answering whom I could ask, and who would give me an answer. 29. See them all, vanity; nothingness are their productions, wind and desolation their molten images.

THIRD PROPHECY.—CHAPS. XLII. 1–XLIII. 13

The Mediator of Israel and Saviour of the Gentiles.

1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, whom my soul loveth: I have laid my Spirit upon Him; He will bring out right to the Gentiles. 2. He will not cry, nor lift up, nor cause to be heard in the street, His voice. 3. A bruised reed He does not break, and a glimmering wick He does not put out: according to truth He brings out right.† 4. He will not become faint or broken till He establish right upon earth, and the islands wait for His instruction.

5. Thus saith God, Jehovah, who created the heavens and stretched them out; who spread the earth, and its productions; who gave the spirit of life to the people upon it, and the breath of life to them that walk upon it; 6, I, Jehovah, I have called thee in righteousness, and grasped thy hand; and I keep thee, and make thee the covenant of the people, the light of the Gentiles, 7, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners out of the prison, them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.

8. I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another, nor my renown to idols. 9. The first, behold, is come to pass, and new things am I proclaiming; before it springs up, I let you hear it.

10. Sing ye to Jehovah a new song, His praise from the end of the earth, ye navigators of the sea, and its fulness; ye islands and

* Or, Beforehand is it said unto Zion, Behold, behold them!—*Kay.*

† He shall cause judgment to go forth unto truth.—*Kay.*

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from the end of the earth, (ye) going down to the sea and its fulness, isles and their inhabitants! 11. The desert and its towns shall raise (the voice), the enclosures (in which) Kedar dwells; the dwellers in the rock shall shout, from the top of the mountains shall they cry aloud. 12. They shall give to Jehovah honour, and His praise in the islands they shall show forth. 13. Jehovah, like a strong one, will go forth; like a warrior He will rouse (His) zeal; He will shout, yea, He will cry; against His foes will show Himself strong. 14. I have long been still, (saying) I will hold my peace, I will restrain myself. (But now), like the travailing (woman) I will shriek, I will pant and gasp at once. 15. I will lay waste mountains and hills, and all their herbage will I dry up; I will turn streams to islands, and pools will I dry up. 16. And I will make the blind walk in a way they knew not, in paths they knew not I will make them tread; I will turn darkness before them to light, and obliquities to straightness. These are the words; I have made them, and have not left them. 17. They shall be turned back, they shall be utterly ashamed, those trusting in the graven image, those saying to the molten images, Ye are our gods!

18. Ye deaf, hear! and, ye blind, look to see! 19. Who (is) blind but my servant, and deaf like my messenger (whom) I will send? Who (is) blind like the devoted are, and blind like the servant of Jehovah? 20. Thou hast seen many things and wilt not observe. (Sent) to open ears! and he will not hear! 21. Jehovah (is) willing for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honourable.

22. And (yet) it (is) a people spoiled and robbed, ensnared in holes all of them, and in houses of confinement they are hidden. They have become a spoil, and there is none delivering; a prey, and there is none saying, Restore! 23. Who among you will give ear to this, and hearken and hear for the time to come? 24. Who has given Jacob for a prey, and Israel to spoilers? Has not Jehovah, against whom we have sinned? and they were not willing in His ways to walk, and did not hearken to His law. 25. And He poured upon him fury, (even) His wrath and the violence of war and it set him on fire round about, and he knew it not; and it burned him, and he will not lay it to heart.

XLIII.—[Israel is the peculiar people of Jehovah, cherished and favoured at the expense of other nations, vers. 1–4. But these are one day to become partakers of the same advantages, vers. 5–9. The proofs of the Divine protection are afforded by the history of Israel, vers. 10–13. One of the most remarkable, yet future, is the downfall of Babylon and the liberation of the exiles, vers. 14, 15. An analogous example was the

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their inhabitants. 11. Let the desert and the cities thereof strike up, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit; the inhabitants of the rock-city may rejoice, shout from the summits of the mountains. 12. Let them give glory to Jehovah, and proclaim His praise in the islands. 13. Jehovah, like a hero will He go forth, kindle jealousy like a man of war; He will break forth into a war-cry, a yelling war-cry, prove Himself a hero upon His enemies.

14. I have been silent eternally long, over still, restrained myself; like* a travailing woman, I now breathe again, snort and snuff together. 15. I will make waste mountains and hills, and all their herbage I dry up, and change streams into islands, and lakes I dry up. 16. And I lead the blind by a way that they know not; by steps that they know not, I make them walk: I turn dark space before them into light, and rugged places into a plain. These are the things that I carry out, and do not leave.

17. They fall back, are put deeply to shame, that trust in molten images, that say to the molten image, Thou art our God.

18. Ye deaf, hear; and ye blind, look up that ye may see.

19. Who is blind but my servant? and deaf, as my messenger whom I send? who blind as the confidant of God, and blind as the servant of Jehovah? 20. Thou hast seen much, and yet keepest not; opening the ears, he yet doth not hear. 21. Jehovah was pleased for His righteousness' sake: He gave a Church [direction, instruction, revelation] great and glorious. 22. And yet it is a people robbed and plundered; fastened in holes all of them, and they are hidden in prison-houses: they have become booty, without deliverers; a spoil, without any one saying, Give it up again!

23. Who among you will give ear to this, attend, and hear afar off? 24. Who has given up Jacob to plundering, and Israel to the spoilers? Is it not Jehovah, against whom we have sinned? and they would not walk in His way, and hearkened not to His law. 25. Then He poured upon it in burning heat His wrath, and the strength of the fury of war: and this set it in flames round about, and it did not come to be recognised; it set on fire, and it did not lay it to heart.

* Now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will desolate and swallow up at once.—*Kay.*

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deliverance from Egypt, vers. 16, 17. But both these instances shall be forgotten in comparison with the great change which awaits the Church hereafter, vers. 18–21. Of all these distinguishing favours none was owing to the merit of the people, but all to the sovereign grace of God, vers. 22–25. The people were not only destitute of merit, but deserving of punishment, which they had experienced and must experience again, vers. 26–28.]

1. And now, thus saith Jehovah, thy Creator, O Jacob, and thy Former, O Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called by thy name, thou art mine. 2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be scorched, and the flame shall not burn thee. 3. For I, Jehovah, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour, have given (as) thy ransom Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, instead of thee. 4. Since thou wast precious in my eyes; thou hast been honoured, and I have loved thee, and will give men instead of thee, and nations instead of thy life.

5. Fear not, for I (am) with thee; from the east I will make thy seed come, and from the west I will gather thee; 6, I will say to the north, Give, and to the south, Withhold not, let my sons come from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7, Every one called by my name, and for my glory I have created him; I have formed him, yea, I have made him. 8. He hath brought out the blind people, and there are eyes (to them), and the deaf, and (there are) ears to them. 9. All the nations are gathered together, and the people are to be assembled. Who among them will declare this, and let us hear the first things? Let them produce their witnesses and be justified; and (if they cannot do this) let them hear (my witnesses), and say, (It is) the truth.

10. Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me, and may understand that I am He; before me was not formed a god, and after me there shall not be; 11, I, I Jehovah, and besides me there is no Saviour. 12. I have told and have saved and have declared, and there is not among you (any) stranger; and ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I (am) God. 13. Even from the day I am He, and there is no one freeing from my hand; I will do, and who will undo it?

14. Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down

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XLIII.—1. But now thus saith Jehovah thy Creator, O Jacob, and thy Former, O Israel! Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. 2. When thou goest through the water, I am with thee; and through rivers, they shall not drown thee: when thou goest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; and the flame shall not set thee on fire. 3. For I Jehovah am thy God; (I) the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I give up Egypt as a ransom for thee, Ethiopia and Seba in thy stead. 4. Because thou art dear in my eyes, highly esteemed, and I loved thee; I give up men in thy stead, and peoples for thy life.

5. Fear not; for I am with thee: I bring thy seed from the east, and from the west will I gather thee; 6, I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth; 7, everything that is called by my name, and I have created for my glory, that I have formed, yea finished!

8. Bring out a blind people, and it has eyes; and deaf people, and yet furnished with ears! 9. All ye heathen, gather yourselves together, and let peoples assemble! Who among you can proclaim such a thing? And let them cause former things to be heard, appoint their witnesses, and be justified. Let these hear, and say, True! 10. Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and see that it is I: before me was no God formed, and there will be none after me.

11. I, I am Jehovah; and beside me there is no Saviour. 12. I,* I have proclaimed and brought salvation, and given to perceive, and there was no other God among you: and ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I am God. 13. Even from the day onwards I am so; and there is no deliverer out of my hand; I act, and who can turn it back?

FOURTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. XLIII. 14.—XLIV. 5.

Avenging and Deliverance; and Outpouring of the Spirit.

14. Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babel, and will hurl them all down as fugi-

* I myself declared (beforehand), and saved (in accordance with that declaration), and published (the account of that deliverance); I myself have done this, and there was no strange (god) among you. *Kay.*

I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, and it was no strange god that was among you.—*Matthew Arnold.*

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fugitives all of them; and the Chaldeans, in the ships their shout; 15, I, Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.

16. Thus saith Jehovah, the (One) giving in the sea a way, and in mighty waters a path; 17, the (One) bringing out chariot and horse, force and strong; together shall they lie, they shall not rise; they are extinct, like tow they are quenched.

18. Remember not former things, and old things consider not. 19. Behold I (am) doing (something) new, it is yet to sprout; do you not know it? Yes, I will place in the wilderness a way, in the desert streams. 20. The living creature of the field shall honour me, jackals and ostriches; because I have given in the wilderness waters, and streams in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21. This people I have formed for myself; my praise shall they recount.

22. And not me hast thou called, O Jacob; for thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. 23. Thou hast not brought to me the sheep of thy burnt-offering, and (with) thy sacrifices thou hast not honoured me. I have not made thee serve with oblations, and I have not wearied thee with incense. 24. Thou hast not brought for me sweet cane with money, and with the fat of thy sacrifices thou hast not drenched me; thou hast only made me serve with thy sins, and wearied me with thine iniquities. 25. I, I am he blotting out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and thy sins I will not remember.

26. Remind me; let us plead together: state (thy case) that thou mayest be justified. 27. Thy first father sinned, and thy interpreters rebelled against me. 28. And I will profane the holy chiefs, and will give up Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

XLIV.—[The chapter opens, like the fortieth and forty-third, with cheering promises to Israel, followed by reasons for confiding in them, drawn from the wisdom, power, and goodness of Jehovah. The specific promise, which constitutes the theme or basis of the prophecy, is that of abundant spiritual influences and their fruits; not only internal prosperity, but large accessions from without, vers. 1–5. The pledge for the fulfilment of this promise is afforded by the proofs of God's omniscience, as contrasted with all other gods, vers. 6–9. The folly of image-worship is then established by two arguments. The first is, that idols are themselves the creatures of mere men, vers. 10–14. The other is, that they are not only made, and made by man, but made of the very same materials applied to the most trivial domestic uses, vers. 15–20.

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tives, and the Chaldeans into the ships of their rejoicing. 15. I, Jehovah, am your Holy One; (I), Israel's Creator, your King.

16. Thus saith Jehovah, who giveth a road through the sea, and a path through tumultuous waters; 17, who bringeth out chariot and horse, army * and hero; they lie down together, they never rise: they have flickered away, extinguished like a wick. 18. Remember not things of olden time, nor meditate upon those of earlier times! 19. Behold, I work out a new thing; will ye not live to see it? Yea, I make a road through the desert, and streams through solitudes. 20. The beast of the field will praise me, wild dogs and ostriches; for I give water in the desert, streams in solitude, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21. The people that I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise.

22.† And thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, that thou shouldest have wearied thyself for me, O Israel! 23. Thou hast not brought me sheep of my burnt-offerings, and thou hast not honoured me with thy slain-offerings. I have not burdened thee with meat-offerings, and have not troubled thee about incense. 24. Thou hast brought me no spice-cane for silver, nor hast thou refreshed me with the fat of thy slain-offerings. No; thou hast wearied me with thy sins, troubled me with thine iniquities. 25. I, I alone, blot out thy transgressions for my own sake, and do not remember thy sins.

26. Call to my remembrance; we will strive together; tell me now, that thou mayest appear just. 27. Thy first forefather sinned, and thy mediators have fallen away from me. Then I profaned holy princes, and gave up Jacob to the curse, and Israel to blasphemies.

* The valiant and the strong.—*Kay.*

† 22–24. Yet on Me hast thou not called: but thou hast toiled in respect of Me. Thou broughtest not for *Me* the lamb of thy burnt-offerings; with thy sacrifices thou didst not glorify Me: I caused thee no labour in meat-offering, neither made thee to toil in respect of incense. Thou broughtest not sweet cane with money for *Me;* and with the fat of thy sacrifices thou didst not refresh *Me.* Verily, thou hast caused Me to labour by thy sins; thou hast made Me to toil by thine iniquities.—*Kay.*

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From this demonstration of the power of Jehovah to perform His promise we are now brought back to the promise itself, vers. 21–24. This is again confirmed by an appeal to God's creative power, and illustrated by the raising up of Cyrus as a deliverer to Israel, vers. 25–28.]

1. And now hear, Jacob my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. 2. Thus saith Jehovah, Thy Maker and thy Former from the womb will help thee; fear not, my servant Jacob, and Jeshurun whom I have chosen. 3. For I will pour waters on the thirsty, and flowing (waters) on the dry (land); I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring. 4. And they shall spring up in the midst of the grass, like willows by the water-courses. 5. This shall say, To Jehovah I (belong); and this shall call on the name of Jacob; and this shall inscribe with his hand, To Jehovah, and with the name of Israel shall entitle.

6. Thus saith Jehovah, King of Israel, and his Redeemer Jehovah of hosts; I (am) first, and I (am) last, and without me there is no God. 7. And who, like me, will call, and tell it, and state it to me, since I placed the ancient people; and coming things and things which are to come will tell to them? 8. Quake not, and fear not; have I not let thee hear and told thee, and are ye not my witnesses? Is there a God without me? I know not (any). 9. The image-carvers all of them are vanity, and their desired ones are worthless; and their witnesses themselves will not see and will not know, that they may be ashamed.

10. Who formed the god and cast the image to no use? 11. Lo, all his fellows shall be ashamed, and the workmen themselves are of men; they shall assemble all of them, they shall stand, they shall tremble, they shall be ashamed together. 12. He has carved (iron) with a graver, and has wrought (it) in the coals, and with his hammer he will shape it, and then work it with his arm of strength. Besides, he is hungry and has no strength, he has not drunk water and is faint. 13. He has carved wood, he has stretched a line, he will mark it with the awl, he will form it with the chisel, and with the compass he will mark it, and then he will make it after the model of a man, like the beauty of mankind, to dwell in

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XLIV.—1. And now hear, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. 2. Thus saith Jehovah, thy Creator, and thy Former from the womb, who cometh to thy help: Fear not, my servant Jacob, and Jeshurun, whom I have chosen! 3. For I will pour water on thirsty ones, and brooks upon the dry ground; will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine after-growth; 4, and they shoot up among the grass, as willows by flowing waters. 5. One will say, I belong to Jehovah; and a second will solemnly name the name of Jacob; and a third * will inscribe himself to Jehovah, and name the name of Israel with honour.

FIFTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. XLIV. 6–23.

The ridiculous gods of the nations; and the God of Israel, who makes His people to rejoice.

6. Thus saith Jehovah the King of Israel, and its Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts; I am first, and I last; and beside me there is no god. 7.† And who preaches as I do? Let him make it known, and show it to me; since I founded the people of ancient time! And future things, and what is approaching, let them only make known. 8. Despair ye not, neither tremble: have I not told thee long ago, and made it known, and ye are my witnesses: is there a God beside me? And nowhere a rock; I know of none.

9. The makers of idols, they are all desolation, and their bosom children worthless; and those who bear witness for them see nothing and know nothing, that they may be put to shame. 10. Who hath formed the god, and cast the idol to no profit? 11. Behold, all its followers will be put to shame; and the workmen are men: let them all assemble together, draw near, be alarmed, be all put to shame together.

12. The iron-smith‡ has a chisel, and works with red-hot coals, and shapes it with hammers, and works it with his powerful arm. He gets hungry thereby, and his strength fails; if he drink no water he becomes exhausted. 13. The carpenter draws the line, marks it with the pencil, carries it out with planes, and makes a drawing of it with the compass, and carries it out like the figure of

* Shall write with his hand, THE LORD'S.—*Kay.*

† 7. And who, as I, can ordain, and announce it, and set it in order for me, ever since I appointed the ancient people? and coming things, and those which shall come, can they show unto them?—*Kay.*

And who, as I, hath foretold (let him declare it, and set it in order for me!) since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and that shall come, let them show!—*Matthew Arnold.*

‡ The iron-smith (maketh) an adze, and worketh it in the coal.—*Kay.*

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a house. 14. To hew him down cedars, and (now) he has taken a cypress and an oak—and has raised it for himself among the trees of the forest—he has planted a pine, and the rain shall increase (it). 15. And it shall be to men for fuel, and he has taken of them and warmed himself; yea, he will kindle and bake bread; yea, he will form a god and fall prostrate; he has made it a graven image and bowed down to them. 16. Half of it he hath burned in the fire; on half of it he will eat flesh, he will roast and be filled; yea, he will warm himself and say, Aha, I am warm, I have seen fire. 17. And the rest of it he has made into a god, into his graven image; he will bow down to it, and will worship, and will pray to it, and say, Deliver me, for thou (art) my god. 18. They have not known, and they will not understand, for He hath smeared their eyes from seeing, their hearts from doing wisely. 19. And he will not bring it home to himself, and there (is) not knowledge, and (there is) not understanding to say, Half of it I have burned in the fire, and have also baked bread on its coals; I will roast flesh and eat, and the rest of it I will make to (be) an abomination; to a log of wood I will cast myself down. 20. Feeding on ashes, (his) heart is deceived; it has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself; and he will not say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

21. Remember these (things), Jacob and Israel, for thou art my servant; I have formed thee, a servant unto me art thou; Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten by me. 22. I have blotted out, like a cloud, thy transgressions, and like a vapour, thy sins; return to me, for I have redeemed thee. 23. Sing, O heavens, for Jehovah hath done (it); shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth, ye mountains, into song, the forest and every tree in it: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and in Israel He will glorify Himself. 24. Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and thy former from the womb, I, Jehovah, making all, stretching the heavens alone, spreading the earth by myself.

25. Breaking the signs of babblers, and diviners He will madden; turning sages back, and their knowledge He will stultify; 26, confirming the word of His servant, and the counsel of His messengers He will fulfil; the (One) saying as to Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited, and as to the cities of Judah, They

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a man, like the beauty of a man, which may dwell in the house.

14. One * prepares to cut down cedars, and takes holm and oak-tree, and chooses for himself among the trees of the forest. He planteth a fig, and the rain draws it up. 15. And it serves the man for firing: he takes thereof, and warms himself; he also heats, and bakes bread; he also works it into a god, and prostrates himself; makes an idol of it, and falls down before it. 16. The half of it he has burned in the fire! over the half of it he eats flesh, roasts a roast, and is satisfied; he also warms himself, and says, Hurrah! I am getting warm, I feel the heat. 17. And the rest of it he makes into a god, into his idol, and says, Save me, for thou art my god!

18. They perceive not, and do not understand: for their eyes are smeared over, so that they do not see; their hearts that they do not understand. 19. And men take it not to heart, no perception and no understanding, that men should say, The half of it I have burned in the fire, and also baked bread upon the coals thereof; roasted flesh, and eaten: and ought I to make the rest of it into an abomination, to fall down before the produce of a tree? 20. He who striveth after ashes, a befooled heart has led him astray, and he does not deliver his soul, and does not think, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

21. Remember this, Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee, thou art servant to me, O Israel: thou art not forgotten by me. 22.† I have blotted out thy transgressions as a mist, and thy sins as clouds: return to me; for I have redeemed thee.

23. Exult, O heavens; for Jehovah hath accomplished it: shout, ye depths of the earth; break out, ye mountains, into exulting; thou forest, and all the wood therein: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and He showeth Himself glorious upon Israel.

SIXTH PROPHECY.—CHAPS. XLIV. 24.—XLV.

Cyrus, the anointed of Jehovah, and deliverer of Israel.

24. Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and He that formed thee from the womb, I Jehovah am He that accomplisheth all; who stretched out the heavens alone, spread out the earth by Himself; 25, who bringeth to nought the signs of the prophets of lies, and exposeth the soothsayers as raging mad; who turneth back the wise men, and maketh their science folly; 26, who realiseth the word of His servant, and accomplisheth the prediction

* 14. He must cut down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, and he encourageth himself in the trees of the forest.—*Kay.*

† 22. I have swept away as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a dark cloud thy sins.—*Kay.*

I blot out, as a dark cloud, thy transgressions, and, as the clouds, thy sins.—*Revised English Bible.*

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shall be built, and the ruins will I raise; 27, the (One) saying to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy floods; 28, the (One) saying as to Cyrus, My shepherd, and all my pleasure he will fulfil, and saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and (to) the temple, Thou shalt be founded.

XLV.—[The chapter opens, in direct continuation of the forty-fourth, with a further prophecy of Cyrus and of his successors, vers. 1–3. These are then referred to the power of God and His design of mercy towards His people, so that all misgivings or distrust must be irrational and impious, vers. 4–13. Then leaving Cyrus out of view, the prophet turns his eyes to the nations, and declares that they must be subdued, but only in order to be blessed and saved, which is declared to have been the divine purpose, and revealed as such from the beginning, vers. 14–25.]

1. Thus saith Jehovah to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held fast, to tread down before him nations, and the loins of kings I will loose; to open before him double doors, and gates shall not be shut. 2. I will go before thee, and uneven places will I level; doors of brass I will break, and bars of iron I will cut. 3. And I will give thee treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, in order that thou mayest know that I Jehovah, the (One) calling thee by name, am the God of Israel.

4. For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen, therefore will I call thee by thy name; I will give thee a title, and thou hast not known me. 5. I am Jehovah, and there is no other; except me there is no God; I will gird thee, and thou hast not known me; 6. that they may know, from the rising of the sun to the west, that there is none without me; I am Jehovah, and there is no other. 7. Forming light and creating darkness, making peace and creating evil, I (am) Jehovah doing all these things. 8. Distil, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour out righteousness; let the earth open, and let salvation and righteousness grow, let him bring (them) forth together. I Jehovah have created it. 9. Woe to him striving with his Maker—a potsherd with potsherds of the earth. Shall clay say to its former, What art thou doing? and thy work, He has no hands? 10. Woe to him saying to a father, What wilt thou beget? and to a mother, What wilt thou bring forth? 11. Thus saith Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel and his Maker, Ask me (of) the things to come; concerning my sins and concerning the work of my hands, ye may command me. 12. I made the earth, and man upon it I created; I, my hands, spread the heavens, and all their host commanded. 13. I, and no other, raised him up in righteousness, and all his ways will I make straight; (it is) he (that) shall build my city, and my captivity he will send (home),

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of His messengers; who saith to Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited, and their ruins I raise up again! 27, who saith to the whirlpool, Dry up; and I dry its streams; 28, who saith to Koresh, My shepherd, and he will perform all my will; and will say to Jerusalem, She shall be built, and the temple founded!

XLV.—1. Thus saith Jehovah to His anointed, to Koresh, whom I have taken by his right hand to subdue nations before him, and the loins of kings I ungird, to open before him doors and gates, that they may not continue shut. 2. I shall go before thee, and level what is heaped up: gates of brass shall I break to pieces, and bolts of iron shall I smite to the ground. 3. And I shall give thee treasures of darkness, and jewels of hidden places, that thou mayest know that I Jehovah am He who called out thy name, (even) the God of Israel.

4. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I called thee hither by name, surnamed thee when thou knewest me not. 5. I Jehovah, and there is none else, beside me no God: I equipped thee when thou knewest me not; 6, that they may know from the rising of the sun, and its going down, that there is none without me; I Jehovah, and there is none else; 7, former of the light, and creator of the darkness; founder of peace, and creator of evil: I Jehovah am He who worketh all this.

8. Cause to trickle down, ye heavens above, and let the blue sky rain down righteousness; let the earth open, and let salvation blossom, and righteousness; let them sprout together; I Jehovah have created it.

9. Woe to him that quarrelleth with his Maker—a pot among the pots of earthenware! Can the clay indeed say to him that shapeth it, What makest thou? and thy work, He hath no hands? 10. Woe to him that saith to his father, What begettest thou? and to the woman, What bringest thou forth?

11. Thus saith Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker, Ask me what is to come; let my sons and the work of my hands be committed to me! 12. I, I have made the earth, and created men upon it; I, my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I called forth. 13. I, I have raised him up in righteousness, and all his ways

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not for reward, and not for hire, saith Jehovah of hosts.

14. Thus saith Jehovah, The toil of Egypt, and the gain of Cush, and the Sebaim men of measure unto thee shall pass, and to thee shall they belong, after thee shall they go, in chains shall they pass over; and unto thee shall they bow themselves, to thee shall they pray, saying, Only in thee (is) God, and there is none besides, no (other) God. 15. Verily thou art a God hiding thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour! 16. They are ashamed and also confounded all of them together, they are gone away in confusion—the carvers of images. 17. Israel is saved in Jehovah (with) an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed, and ye shall not be confounded for ever. 18. For thus saith Jehovah, the creator of the heavens—He is God—the former of the earth and its maker—He established it—not to be empty did He create it—to be inhabited He formed it—I am Jehovah, and there is none besides. 19. Not in secret have I spoken, in a dark place of the earth; I have not said to the seed of Jacob, In vain seek ye me. I (am) Jehovah, speaking truth, declaring right things. 20. Gather yourselves and come; draw near together, ye escaped of the nations. They know not, those carrying the wood, their graven image, and praying to a god (who) cannot save. 21. Bring forward and bring near! Yea, let them consult together. Who hath caused this to be heard of old, since thou declared it? Have not I Jehovah? and there is no other God besides me; a righteous and a saving God, there is none besides me. 22. Turn unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none besides. 23. By myself I have sworn; the word is gone out of a mouth of righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me shall bow every knee, shall swear every tongue. 24. Only in Jehovah have I, says he, righteousness and strength; unto Him shall he come, and all that were incensed at Him shall be ashamed. 25. In Jehovah shall be justified and boast themselves all the seed of Israel.

XLVI.—[In confirmation of the general threats and promises with which chap. xlv. is wound up, the prophet now exhibits the particular case of the Babylonian idols, as a single instance chosen from the whole range of past and future history. They are described as fallen and gone away into captivity, wholly unable to protect their worshippers or save themselves, vers. 1, 2. With these he then contrasts Jehovah's constant care of Israel in time past and in time to come, vers. 3, 4. The contrast is carried out by another description of the origin and impotence of idols, vers. 5–7, and another assertion of Jehovah's sole divinity, as proved by His knowledge and con-

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shall I make smooth: he will build my city, and release my banished ones, not for price nor for reward, saith Jehovah of hosts.

14. Thus saith Jehovah, The productions of Egypt, and gain of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of tall stature, will come over to thee, and belong to thee; they will come after thee; in chains they will come over, and cast themselves down to thee; they pray to thee, Surely God is in thee, and there is none else; no Deity at all.

15. Verily Thou art a mysterious God, Thou God of Israel, Thou Saviour.

16. They are put to shame, and also confounded, all of them; they go away into confusion together, the forgers of idols. 17. Israel is redeemed by Jehovah with everlasting redemption; ye are not put to shame nor confounded to everlasting eternities.

18. For thus saith Jehovah, the creator of the heavens (He is the Deity), the former of the earth, and its finisher; He has established it, He has not created it a desert, He has formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah, and there is none else. 19. I have not spoken in secret, in a place of the land of darkness; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, Into the desert seek ye me! I Jehovah am speaking righteousness, proclaiming upright things.

20. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye escaped of the heathen! Irrational are they who burden themselves with the wood of their idol, and pray to a god that bringeth no salvation. 21. Make known, and cause to draw near; yea, let them take counsel together: Who has made such things known from the olden time, proclaimed it long ago? have not I, Jehovah? and there is no Deity beside me; a God just, and bringing salvation; there is none without me!

22. Turn unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and none else. 23. By myself have I sworn, a word has gone out of my mouth of righteousness, and will not return, That to me every knee shall bend, every tongue swear. 24.* Only in Jehovah, do men say of Me, is fulness of righteousness and strength; they come to Him, and all that were incensed against Him are put to shame. 25. In Jehovah all the seed of Israel shall become righteous, and shall glory.

* 24. Only in the Lord (saith one unto Me) is righteousness and strength; even to him shall one come; and all that were incensed against Him shall be ashamed.—*Kay.*

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trol of the future, and by the raising up of Cyrus in particular, vers. 8–11. This brings him back to the same solemn warning of approaching judgments, and the same alternative of life and death, with which the foregoing chapter closes, vers. 12, 13.]

1. Bel is bowed down, Nebo stooping; their images are (consigned) to the beasts and to the cattle. Your burdens are packed up (as) a load to the weary (beast). 2. They stoop, they bow together; they cannot save the load; themselves are gone into captivity.

3. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, those borne from the belly, those carried from the womb. 4. And to old age I am He, and to grey hair I will bear (you); I have done it, and I will carry and I will bear and save (you).

5. To whom will ye liken me, and equal and compare me, that we may be like? 6. The prodigals will weigh gold from the bag, and silver with the rod; they will hire a gilder, and he will make it a god: they will bow down, yea, they will fall prostrate. 7. They will lift him on the shoulder, they will carry him, they will set him in his place, and he will stand (there); from his place he will not move; yea, one will cry to him, and he will not answer, from his distress he will not save him.

8. Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it home, ye apostates, (to) your mind. 9. Remember former things of old, for I am the Mighty, and there is no other God, and there is none like me, 10, declaring from the first the last, and from ancient time the things which are not (yet) done, saying, My counsel shall stand and all my pleasure I will do. 11. Calling from the east a bird of prey, from a land of distance the man of His counsel; I have both said and will also bring it to pass, I have formed (the plan) and will also do it.

12. Hearken to me, ye stout of heart, those far from righteousness. 13. I have brought near my righteousness, it shall not be far off; and my salvation, it shall not tarry; and I will place in Zion my salvation, to Israel my glory.

XLVII.—[Having exemplified his general doctrine, as to God's ability and purpose to do justice both to friends and foes, by exhibiting the downfall of the Babylonian idols, Isaiah now attains the same end by predicting the downfall of Babylon itself, and of the state to which it gave its name. Under the figure of a royal virgin, she is threatened with extreme degradation and exposure, vers. 1–3. Connecting this event with Israel and Israel's

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SEVENTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. XLVI.

Fall of the Gods of Babel.

1. Bel sinketh down, Nebo stoopeth; the images come to the beast of burden and draught cattle: your * litters are laden, a burden for the panting. 2. They stooped, sank down all at once, and could not get rid of the burden; and their own self went into captivity.

3. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel: ye, lifted up from the womb; ye, carried from the mother's lap. 4. And till old age it is I, and to grey hair I shall bear you on my shoulder; I have done it, and I shall carry; and I put upon my shoulder, and deliver. 5. To whom can ye compare me, and liken, and place side by side, that we should be equal?

6. They who pour gold out of the bag, and weigh silver with the balance, hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, that they may bow down, yea, throw themselves down. 7. They lift it up, carry it away on their shoulder, and set it down in its place! there it is; from its place it does not move; men also cry to it, but it does not answer; it saves no man out of distress.

8. Remember this, and become firm, take it to heart, ye rebellious ones! 9. Remember the beginning from the olden time, that I am God, and none else: Deity, and absolutely none like me, 10, proclaiming the issue from the beginning, and from ancient times what has not yet taken place, saying, My counsel shall stand, and all my good pleasure I carry out, 11, calling † a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a distant land: not only have I spoken, I also bring it; I have purposed it, I will also execute it.

12. Hearken to me, ye strong-hearted, that are far from righteousness. 13. I have brought my righteousness near; it is not far off, and my salvation tarrieth not: and I give salvation in Zion, my glory to Israel.

* The things that ye carried are borne heavily. —*Kay.*

What were borne by you are made into loads. —*Jones.*

† Calling from the sunrising a bird of prey.—*Kay.*

Calling an eagle from the east.—*Birks and Arnold.*

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God, as the great themes which it was intended to illustrate, he predicts the fall of the empire more distinctly, ver. 5, and assigns as a reason the oppression of God's people, ver. 6, pride and self-confidence, vers. 7–9, especially reliance upon human wisdom and upon superstitious arts, all which would prove entirely insufficient to prevent the great catastrophe, vers. 10–15.]

1. Come down! Sit on the dust, virgin daughter of Babel! There is no throne, daughter of Chasdim! For thou shalt not continue to be called tender and delicate. 2. Take millstones and grind meal! Remove thy veil, lift up thy skirt, uncover the leg, cross streams! 3. Let thy nakedness be uncovered, likewise let thy shame be seen. I will take vengeance; I shall encounter no man.

4. Our Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts (is) His name, the Holy One of Israel.

5. Sit in silence and go into darkness, daughter of Chasdim! For thou shalt not continue to be called mistress of kingdoms. I was wroth against my people; I profaned my heritage; and I gave them into thy hand. Thou didst not show them mercy; on the ancient thou didst aggravate thy yoke exceedingly; 7, and thou saidst, For ever I shall be a mistress (of kingdoms); until (at last) thou didst not lay these things to heart, thou didst not remember the end of it. 8. And now, hear this, thou voluptuous one, the (one) sitting in security, the (one) saying in her heart, I (am) and none besides; I shall not sit (as) a widow, and I shall not know the loss of children; 9, and they shall come to thee,—these two suddenly, loss of children and widowhood in their perfection, they have come upon thee, in the midst of the multitude of thy enchantments, in the midst of the multitude of thy spells. 10. And (yet) thou art secure in thy wickedness; thou hast said, There is no one seeing me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it has seduced thee; and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and there is no other. 11. And so there cometh upon thee evil,—thou shalt not know how to charm it away; and there shall fall upon thee ruin,—thou shalt not be able to avert it; and there shall come upon thee suddenly a crash,—thou shalt not know (it). 12. Persist now in thy spells and in the abundance of thy charms, in which thou hast wearied thyself; perhaps thou wilt be able to succeed, perhaps thou wilt grow strong. 13. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsel. Now let them stand and save thee, the dividers of the heavens, the star-gazers, making known at

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EIGHTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. XLVII.

Fall of Babel, the Capital of the Empire of the World.

1. Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin-daughter Babel; sit on the ground without a throne,* O Chaldean's daughter! For men no longer call thee delicate and voluptuous. 2. Take the mill, and grind meal; throw back thy train, uncover the thigh, wade through streams. Let thy nakedness be uncovered, even let thy shame be seen; I shall take vengeance, and† not spare men. 4. Our Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts is His name, Holy One of Israel.

5. Sit silent, and creep into the darkness, O Chaldean's daughter! for men no longer call thee lady of kingdoms. 6. I was wroth with my people; I polluted mine inheritance, and gave them into thy hand: thou hast shown them no mercy; upon old men thou laidst thy yoke very heavily. 7. And thou saidst, I shall be lady for ever; so that thou didst not take these things to heart; thou didst not consider the latter end thereof.

8. And now hear this, thou voluptuous one, she who sitteth so securely, who sayeth in her heart, I am it, and none else; I shall not sit a widow, nor experience bereavement of children. 9. And these two come upon thee suddenly in one day: bereavement of children and widowhood; they come upon thee in fullest measure, in spite of the multitude of thy sorceries, in spite of the great abundance of thy witchcrafts. 10. Thou trustedst in thy wickedness, and saidst, No one seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, they led thee astray; so that thou saidst in thy heart, I am it, and none else. 11. And misfortune cometh upon thee, which‡ thou understandest not how to charm away: and destruction will fall upon thee, which thou canst not atone for; for there will come suddenly upon thee ruin which thou suspectest not.

12. Come near, then, with thy enchantments, and with the multitude of thy witchcrafts, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth: perhaps thou canst profit, perhaps thou canst inspire terror. 13. Thou art wearied through the multitude of thy consultations; § let the dissectors of the heavens come near, then, and save thee, the star-gazers, they who with every new moon bring things

* Sit on the ground throneless.—*Kay.*

† I will meet thee, not as man.—*Birks.*
And I will be entreated of for thee by no man.—*Matthew Arnold.*
And I will accept no man.—*Revised English Version.*

‡ Thou shalt not know its dawn.—*Birks and Kay.*

§ Let them stand now and save thee,—they that have portioned out the heavens, those star-gazers, prognosticating at each new moon,—from the things that shall come upon thee.—*Kay.*
Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the prognosticators by the new moon, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.—*Matthew Arnold.*

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the new-moon what shall come upon thee. 14. Behold, they are like stubble, fire has burned them; they cannot deliver themselves from the hand of the flame; (this fire) is not a coal (at which) to warm one's self, a fire to sit before. 15. Thus are they to thee; and so are (even) thy traders: each to his own quarter, straight before him, they wander; there is no one saving thee.

XLVIII.—[Although Israel is God's chosen and peculiar people, he is in himself unworthy of the honour and unfaithful to the trust, vers. 1, 2. Former predictions had been uttered expressly to prevent his ascribing the event to other gods, vers. 3–5. For the same reason new predictions will be uttered now, of events which have never been distinctly foretold, vers. 6–8. God's continued favour to His people has no reference to merit upon their part, but is the fruit of His own sovereign mercy, and intended to promote His own designs, vers. 9–11. He again asserts His own exclusive deity, as proved by the creation of the world, by the prediction of events still future, and especially by the raising up of Cyrus, as a promised instrument to execute His purpose, vers. 12–16. The sufferings of Israel are a fruit of his own sin, but his prosperity and glory, of God's sovereign grace, vers. 17–19. The book closes as it opened, with a promise of deliverance from exile, accompanied in this case by a solemn limitation of the promise to its proper objects, vers. 20–22.]

1. Hear this, O house of Jacob, the men called by the name of Israel, and from the waters of Judah they have come out; those swearing by the name of Jehovah, and (who) of the God of Israel make mention, not in truth and not in righteousness. 2. Nor from the Holy City they are called, and upon the God of Israel rely; Jehovah of hosts is His name.

3. The former things since then have I declared, and out of my mouth they went forth, and I cause them to be heard; suddenly do I do (them), and they come to pass. 4. Because I knew that thou art hard, and an iron sinew (is) thy neck, and thy forehead brass, 5, therefore I told thee long ago; before it comes I have let thee hear (it), lest thou say, My idol did them, my graven image and my molten image ordered them.

6. Thou hast heard the (prediction), see all of it accomplished. And ye, will ye not predict (something)? I have made thee to hear new things from now, and (things) kept (in reserve), which thou hast not known. 7. Now they are created, and not of old; before this

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to light that will come upon thee. 14. Behold, they have become like stubble: fire has consumed them; there is not a red-hot coal to warm themselves, a hearth-fire to sit before. 15. So * is it with thy people, for whom thou hast laboured: thy partners in trade from thy youth, they wander away every one in his own direction; no one who brings salvation to thee.

NINTH PROPHECY—CHAP. XLVIII.

Deliverance from Babylon.

1. Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and have flowed out of the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of Jehovah, and extol the God of Israel, not in truth, and not in righteousness! 2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel, Jehovah of hosts His name.

3. The first I long ago proclaimed, and it has gone forth out of my mouth, and I caused it to be heard. I carried it out suddenly, and it came to pass. 4. Because I knew that thou art hard, and thy neck an iron clasp, and thy brow brass; 5, I proclaimed it to thee long ago; before it came to pass I caused thee to hear it, that thou mightest not say, My idol has done it, and my graven image and molten image commanded it. 6. Thou hast heard it, look then at it all; and ye, must ye not confess it? I give thee new things to hear from this time forth, and hidden things, and what thou didst not know. 7. It is created now, and not long ago; and thou hast not heard it before; that thou mightest not say, Behold, I

* Of such worth unto thee are the things wherein thou hast toiled: they that trafficked with thee from thy youth have wandered every one to his own quarter; there is none to save thee.—*Kay.*

Thus will they prove to be unto thee, amongst whom thou hast laboured,
Those with whom thou hast had dealing from thy youth:
They shall become bewildered, every one in his quarter:
Not one will be there to save thee.—*Jones.*

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day thou hast never heard them, lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. 8. Nay, thou didst not hear; nay, thou didst not know; likewise of old thine ear was not opened; I knew thou wouldest act very treacherously, and A postate from the womb wast thou called.

9. For my name's sake I will defer my anger, and (for) my praise I will restrain (it) towards thee, so as not to cut thee off. 10. Behold, I have melted thee, and not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. 11. For my own sake, for my own sake, I will do (it) — for how is it profaned! — and my honour to another will I not give.

12. Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called; I am He, I am the First, also I the Last. 13. Also my hand founded the earth, and my right hand spread the heavens; I call to them, and they will stand up together. 14. Assemble yourselves, all of you, and hear! Who among them hath predicted these things? Jehovah loves him; He will do His pleasure in Babylon, and His arm (shall be upon) the Chaldees. 15. I, I have spoken; I have also called him; I have brought him (forth), and he prospers in his way. 16. Draw near unto me! Hear this; not from the beginning in secret have I spoken; from the time of its being, I was there; and now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me, and His Spirit.

17. Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am Jehovah thy God, teaching thee to profit, making thee to tread in the way thou shalt go. 18. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; 19, then should have been like the sand thy seed, and the offspring of thy bowels like (the offspring of) its bowels; his name should not be cut off from before me.

20. Go forth from Babel! Flee ye from the Chaldeans! With the voice of joy tell this, cause it to be heard, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, Jehovah hath redeemed His servant Jacob. 21. And they thirsted not in the desert (through which) He made them go; water from a rock he made to flow for them; and He clave the rock, and waters gushed out. 22. There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the wicked.

XLIX.—[This chapter, like the whole division which it introduces, has for its great theme the relation of the Church to the world, or of Israel to the Gentiles. It opens with an exhibition of the Messiah and His people, under one ideal person, as the great appointed Teacher, Apostle, and Restorer of the apostate nations, vers. 1–9. This is

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knew it. 8. Thou hast neither heard it, nor known it, nor did thine ear open itself to it long ago; for I knew thou art altogether faithless, and thou art called rebellious from the womb. 9. For my name's sake I lengthen out my wrath, and for my praise I hold back towards thee, that I may not cut thee off. 10. Behold, I have refined thee, and not in the manner of silver; I have proved thee in the furnace of affliction. 11. For mine own sake, for mine own sake I accomplish it (for how * is it profaned!) and my glory I give not to another.

12. Hearken to me, O Jacob, and Israel my called! I am it; I first, also I last. 13. My hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: I call to them, and they stand there together. 14. All ye, assemble yourselves, and bear: Who among you hath proclaimed this? He whom Jehovah loveth will accomplish His will upon Babel, and His arm upon the Chaldeans. 15. I, I have spoken, have also called him, have brought him here, and his way prospers. 16. Come ye near to me! Hear ye this! I have not spoken in secret from the beginning from the time that it takes place, there am I: and now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me and His Spirit.

17. Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I, Jehovah thy God, am He that teacheth thee to do that which profiteth, and leadest thee by the way that thou shouldest go. 18. Oh † that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then thy peace becomes like the river, and thy righteousness like waves of the sea; 19, and thy seed like the sand, and the children of thy body like the grains thereof; its name will not be cut off nor destroyed away from my countenance.

20. Go out of Babel, flee from Chaldea with voice of shouting: declare ye, preach ye this, carry it out to the end of the earth! Say ye, Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob His servant. 21. And they thirsted not: He led them through dry places; He caused water to trickle out of rocks for them; He split rocks, and waters gushed out. 22. There is no peace, saith Jehovah, for the wicked.

* For how should my name be profaned?—*Kay and Arnold.*

† 18. Oh that thou wouldest hearken to my commandments! then should thy peace be as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; 19, thy seed also should be as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels as the grave thereof; his name should not be cut off, &c.—*Kay.*

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followed by a promise of Divine protection and of glorious enlargement, attended by a joyous revelation in the state of the whole world, vers. 10–13. The doubts and apprehensions of the Church herself are twice recited under different forms, vers. 14, 24, and as often met and silenced, first by repeated and still stronger promises of God's unchanging love to His people and of their glorious enlargement and success, vers. 15–23; then by an awful threatening of destruction to their enemies and His, vers. 25, 26.]

1. Hearken, ye islands, unto me, and attend, ye nations from afar. Jehovah from the womb hath called me, from the bowels of my mother He hath mentioned my name. 2. And He hath rendered my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand He hid me; and He rendered me as a polished arrow, in His quiver He has hid me. 3. And He said to me, Thou art my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 4. And I said, In vain have I toiled, for emptiness and vanity my strength have I consumed; but my right is with Jehovah and my work with my God. 5. And now, saith Jehovah, who formed me from the womb for a servant to Himself, to restore Jacob to Him, and (yet) Israel will not be gathered—and yet I shall be honoured in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God has (already) been my strength. 6. And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and the preserved of Israel to restore; and I have given thee for a light of the Gentiles, to be my salvation even to the end of the earth. 7. Thus saith Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, to the heartily despised, to the nation exciting abhorrence, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see it, and rise up, princes (shall see) and bow themselves, for the sake of Jehovah who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who hath chosen thee. 8. Thus saith Jehovah, In a time of favour I have heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will keep thee, and I will give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the earth, and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; 9, to say to those bound, Come forth, and to (those) who are in darkness, Show yourselves.

On the ways they shall feed, and in all bare hills shall be their pasture. 10. They shall not hunger and they shall not thirst, and there shall not smite them mirage and sun; for He that hath mercy on them shall guide them, and by springs of water shall He lead them. 11. And I will place all mountains for

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PART II.

FIRST PROPHECY.—CHAP. XLIX.

Self-Attestation of the Servant of Jehovah. The Despondency of Zion reproved.

1. Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye nations afar off: Jehovah hath called me from the womb; from my mother's lap hath He remembered my name. 2. And He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He concealed me. 3. And He said to me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, thou in whom I glorify myself.

4. And I, I said, I have wearied myself in vain, and thrown away my strength for nothing and to no purpose; yet my right* is with Jehovah, and my reward with my God.

5. And now, saith Jehovah, that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring back Jacob to Him, and that Israel† may be gathered together to Him; and I am honoured in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God has become my strength. 6. He saith, It is only a small thing that thou becomest my servant, to set up the tribes of Jacob, and to bring back the preserved of Israel: I have set thee for the light of the Gentiles, to become my salvation to the end of the earth.

7. Thus saith Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, to him of contemptible soul, to the abhorrence of the people, to the servant of tyrants: Kings shall see and arise; princes, and prostrate themselves for the sake of Jehovah, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, that He hath chosen thee. 8. Thus saith Jehovah, In‡ a time of favour I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee: and I form thee, and set thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to apportion again desolate inheritances, 9, saying to prisoners: Go ye out; to those who are in darkness, Come ye to the light.

They shall feed by the ways, and§ there is pasture for them upon all field-hills. 10. They shall not hunger nor thirst, and the mirage and sun shall not blind them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, and guide them by bubbling water-springs. 11. And I make all my mountains ways, and my

* I set surely my righteousness is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God. 5. And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, and that Israel may be gathered; (for I have honour in the eyes of the Lord, and my God is my strength;) 6, and He said, &c.—*Arnold.*

† But Israel will not be gathered; yet shall I be glorious, &c.—*Kay.*

‡ In a time of acceptance have I answered thee.—*Kay.*

§ And on all bare hill-tops is there pasturage for *them*.—*Kay.*

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the way, and my roads shall be high. 12. Behold, these from afar shall come, and behold these from the north and from the sea, and these from the land of Sinim. 13. Shout, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth, let the mountains burst forth into a shout; because Jehovah has comforted His people, and on His sufferers He will have mercy.

14. And (yet) Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me. 15. Will a woman forget her suckling, so as not to have mercy on the son of her womb? Even these will forget, and (yet) I will not forget thee. 16. Behold, on my palms have I graven thee; thy walls (are) before me continually. 17. Thy sons hasten (to thee); thy destroyers and thy wasters shall go out from thee. 18. Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all of them are gathered together, they are come to thee. (As) I live, saith Jehovah, (I swear) that all of them as an ornament thou shalt put on, and bind them like the bride. 19. For thy ruins, and thy wastes, and thy land of desolation, for now shalt thou be too narrow for the inhabitant, and far off shall be thy devourers. 20. Again shall they say in thine ears, The sons of thy childlessness. (Too) narrow for me is the place; come near for me, that I may dwell. 21. And thou shalt say in thine heart, Who hath produced these for me? and I was bereaved and barren, an exile and a banished one? And these who brought up? Behold, I was left alone; these where were they? 22. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I will lift up to the nations my hand, and I will set up to the peoples my standard; and they will bring thy sons in the bosom, and thy daughters on the shoulders shall be carried. 23. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers; face to the ground shall they bow to thee, and the dust of thy feet shall they lick: and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah, whose waiters shall not be ashamed.

24. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and shall the captivity of the righteous be delivered? 25. For thus saith Jehovah, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered, and with thy strivers will I strive, and thy sons will I save. 26. And I will make thy oppressors eat their (own) flesh, and as with new wine with their blood shall they be drunken; and all flesh shall know that I am Jehovah thy Saviour, and (that) thy Redeemer is the mighty One of Jacob.

L.—[This chapter contains no entirely new element, but a fresh view of several which

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roads are exalted. 12. Behold these, they come from afar; and behold these from the north and from the sea; and these from the land of the Sinese. 13. Sing, O heavens, and shout, O earth; and break out into singing, ye mountains! for Jehovah hath comforted His people, and He hath compassion upon His afflicted ones.

14. Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me. 15. Does a woman forget her sucking child, so as not to have compassion upon the child of her womb? Even though mothers should forget, I will not forget thee. 16. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls stand continually before me.

17. Thy children make haste, thy destroyers and masters draw out from thee. 18. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all these assemble themselves together, and come to thee. As truly as I live, saith Jehovah, thou wilt put them all on like jewellery, and gird them about thee like a bride. 19. For thy ruins and thy waste places and thy land full of ruin,—yea, now thou wilt be too narrow for the inhabitants, and thy devourers are far away. 20. Thy * children, that were formerly taken from thee, shall say in thine ears, The space is too narrow for me; give way for me, that I may have room. 21. And thou wilt say in thy heart, Who hath borne me these, seeing I was robbed of children, and barren, banished, and thrust away; and these, who hath brought them up? Behold, I was left alone; these, where were they?

22. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lift up my hand to nations, and set up my standard to peoples: and they bring thy sons in their bosom; and thy daughters, upon shoulders are they carried. 23. And kings become thy foster-fathers, and their princesses thy nurses: they bow down their face to thee to the earth, and they lick the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt learn that I am Jehovah, He whose hoping ones are not put to shame.

24. Can the booty indeed be wrested from a giant, or will the captive † host of the righteous escape? 25. Yea, thus saith Jehovah, Even the captive hosts of a giant are wrested from him, and the booty of a tyrant escapes! and I ‡ will make war upon him that warreth with thee, and I will bring salvation to thy children. 26. And § I feed them that pain thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as if with new wine; all flesh shall see that I Jehovah am thy Saviour, and that thy Redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob.

* The sons of thy childlessness shall say, &c. —*Kay.*

Thy sons, of whom thou wast bereaved, shall say, &c.—*Jones.*

† The just one's captives.—*Kay.*

‡ For I myself will contend with him that contendeth with thee.—*Kay.*

§ And I will let them that oppress thee eat their own flesh.—*Kay.*

And I will gorge thine oppressors with their own flesh;
And with their own blood, as with new wine, shall they be drunken. —*Jones.*

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have already been repeatedly exhibited. The first of these is the great truth, that the sufferings of God's people are the necessary fruit of their own sins, ver. 1. The second is the power of Jehovah to accomplish their deliverance, vers. 2, 3. The third is the Servant of Jehovah, His mission, His qualifications for it, His endurance of reproach and opposition on account of it, vers. 4–9. The fourth is the way of salvation and the certain doom of those who neglect it, vers. 10, 11.]

1. Thus saith Jehovah, Where is the bill of divorcement of your mother, whom I have sent away? Or which of my creditors (is it) to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities ye have been sold, and for your transgressions has your mother been sent away.

2. Why did I come, and there was no man? (why) did I call, and there was no one answering? Is my hand shortened, shortened, from redemption? and is there with me no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I will dry up the sea, I will make streams a wilderness; let their fish stink for want of water and die of thirst. 3. I will clothe the heavens in blackness, and sackcloth will I make their covering.

4. The Lord God hath given to me a ready tongue, that I might know how to help the weary (with) a word. He will waken, every morning He will waken for me the ear, that I may hear like the disciples. 5. The Lord Jehovah opened for me the ear, and I resisted not, I did not draw back. 6. My back I gave to those smiting, and my cheeks to those plucking (the hair); my face I did not hide from shame and spitting. 7. And the Lord God will help me, therefore I am not confounded: therefore I have set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. 8. Near is my justifier; who will contend with me? We will stand together. Who is my adversary? Let him draw near to me. 9. Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who (is) he (that) will condemn me? All they like the garment shall grow old; the moth shall devour them.

10. Who among you is a fearer of Jehovah, hearkening to the voice of His servant, who walketh in darkness, and there is no light to him? Let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and lean upon his God. 11. Lo, all of you kindling fire, girding sparks (or, fiery darts), go in the light of your fire, and in the sparks ye have kindled. From my hand is this to you; in pain shall ye lie down.

LI.—[This chapter is a direct continuation of the preceding declarations with respect to the vocation of the Church, and the Divine administration towards her. The possibility of her increase, as previously promised, is

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SECOND PROPHECY.—CHAP. L.

Israel's Self-rejection; and the Steadfastness of the Servant of Jehovah.

1. Thus saith Jehovah, Where is your mother's bill of divorce, with which I put her away? Or where is one of my creditors, to whom I sold you? Behold,* for your iniquities are ye sold, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

2. Why did I come, and there was no one there? Why did I call, and there was no one who answered? Is my hand too short to redeem? Or is there no strength in me to deliver? Behold, through my threatening I dry up the sea; turn streams into a plain: their fish rot because there is no water, and die for thirst. 3. I clothe the heavens in mourning, and make sackcloth their covering.

4. The Lord Jehovah hath given me a disciple's tongue, that I may know how to set up the wearied with words: He wakeneth every morning; wakeneth mine ear to attend in a disciple's manner. 5. The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear; and I, I was not rebellious, and did not turn back. 6. I offered my back to smiters, and my cheeks to them that pluck off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7. But the Lord Jehovah will help me: therefore have I not suffered myself to be overcome by mockery: therefore did I make my face like the flint, and knew that I should not be put to shame. 8. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? We will draw near together! Who is my adversary in judgment? Let him draw near to me! 9. Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who is he that could condemn me? Behold, they shall all fall to pieces like a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

10. Who among you is fearing Jehovah, hearkening to the voice of His servant? He that walketh in darkness, and without a ray of light, let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and stay himself upon his God. 11. Behold,† all ye that kindle fire, that equip yourself with burning darts: away into the glow of your own fire, and into the burning darts that ye have kindled! This comes to you from my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

* Behold, by your iniquities ye have sold yourselves.—*Birks and Kay.*

† Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that gird on firebrands: walk amid the flame of your fire, and amid the brands that ye have kindled.—*Kay.*

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evinced by the example of Abraham, from whom all Israel descended, vers. 1–3. In like manner many shall be added from the Gentiles, vers. 4–6. Their enemies shall not only fail to destroy them, but shall be themselves destroyed, vers. 7, 8. This is confirmed by another historical example, that of Egypt, vers. 9, 10. The same assurances are then repeated, with a clearer promise of the new dispensation, vers. 11–16. The chapter closes with a direct address to Zion, who, though helpless in herself and destitute of human aid, is sure of God's protection and of the destruction of her enemies and His, vers. 17–23.]

1. Hearken unto me, ye who are following after righteousness, ye who are seeking Jehovah: look unto the rock (from which) ye have been hewn, and the hole of the pit from which ye have been digged. 2. Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah (that) bare you: for I have called him one, and I will bless him and increase him (still). 3. For Jehovah hath comforted Zion; He hath comforted all our wastes, and hath made her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. 4. Attend unto me, my people; and my nation, unto me give ear: that law from me shall go forth, and my judgment for a light of the nations. 5. Near (is) my righteousness, gone forth is my salvation, and my arm shall judge the nations. For me shall the islands wait, and in my arm they shall hope. 6. Raise to the heavens your eyes, and look unto the earth beneath; and the earth like the garment (which grows old) shall grow old, and its inhabitants likewise shall die; and my salvation to eternity shall be, and my righteousness shall not be broken.

7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, people (with) my law in their heart; fear not the reproach of men, and by their scoffs be not broken (in spirit). 8. For like the (moth-eaten) garment shall the moth devour them, and like the (worm-eaten) wool shall the worm devour them; and my righteousness to eternity shall be, and my salvation to an age of ages.

9. Awake, awake, put on strength, arm of Jehovah; awake, as (in the) days of old, the ages of eternities; art thou not the same that hewed Rahab in pieces, that wounded the dragon? 10. Art not thou the same that dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that placed the depths of the sea (as) a way for the passage of redeemed ones?

11. And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return and come to Zion with shouting, and everlasting joy upon their head; gladness and joy shall overtake (them), sorrow and sighing have fled away. 12. I, I am he that com-

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THIRD PROPHECY.—CHAP. LI.

The bursting forth of Salvation, and turning away of the Cup of Wrath.

1. Hearken to me, ye that are in pursuit of righteousness, ye that seek Jehovah. Look up to the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hollow of the pit whence ye are dug. 2. Look up to Abraham your forefather, and to Sara who bare you, that he was one when I called him, and blessed him, and multiplied him. 3. For Jehovah hath comforted Zion, comforted all her ruins, and turned her desert like Eden, and her steppe as the garden of God; joy and gladness are found in her, thanksgiving and sounding music.

4. Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my congregation! for instruction will go forth from me, and I make a place for my right, to be a light of the nations. 5. My salvation is near, my salvation is drawn out, and my arms will judge nations: the hoping of the islands looks to me, and for mine arm is their waiting. 6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens will pass away like smoke, and the earth fall to pieces like a garment, and * its inhabitants die out like a nonentity; and my salvation will last for ever, and my righteousness does not go to ruin.

7. Hearken unto me, ye that know about righteousness, thou people with my law in the heart; fear ye not the reproach of mortals, and be ye not alarmed at their revilings. 8. For the moth will devour them like a garment, and the worm devour them like woollen cloth; and my righteousness shall stand for ever, and my salvation to distant generations.

9. Awake, awake, clothe thyself in might, O arm of Jehovah; awake, as in the days of ancient time, the ages of the olden world! Was it not thou that didst split Rahab in pieces, and pierced the dragon? 10. Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea, the waters of the great billow; that didst turn the depths of the sea into a way for the redeemed to pass through? 11. And † the emancipated of Jehovah will return, and come to Zion with shouting, and everlasting joy upon their head: they grasp at gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing flee away.

12. I, I am your comforter: who art thou,

* And her inhabitants, as in like manner, shall die.—*Kay.*

† So, *Kay, Birks.* Even so, *Arnold.* Thus, *Jones.*

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forteth you; who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of man (who) is to die, and of the son of man who (as) grass is to be given? 13. And hast forgotten Jehovah thy Maker, spreading the heavens and founding the earth, and hast trembled continually all the day, from before the wrath of the oppressor as he made ready to destroy? And where is (now) the wrath of the oppressor? 14. He hastens bowing to be loosed, and he shall not die in the pit, and his bread shall not fail. 15. And I am Jehovah thy God, rousing the sea, and then its waves roar; Jehovah of hosts (is) His name. 16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and in the shadow of my hand I have hid thee, to plant the heavens, and to found the earth, and to say to Zion, Thou art my people. 17. Rouse thyself! rouse thyself! Arise, Jerusalem! (thou) who hast drunk at the hand of Jehovah the cup of His wrath; the bowl of the cup of reeling thou hast drunk, thou hast wrung out.

18. There is no guide to her of all the sons she has brought forth, and no one grasping her hand of all the sons she has brought up.

19. Both these things are befalling thee: who will mourn for thee? Wasting and ruin, famine and sword: who (but) I will comfort thee? 20. Thy sons were faint; they lie at the head of all the streets like a wild bull in a net, filled with the wrath of Jehovah, the rebuke of thy God. 21. Therefore pray hear this, thou suffering one, and drunken, but not with wine: 22, thus saith thy Lord, Jehovah, and thy God—He will defend His people—Behold, I have taken from thy hand the cup of reeling, the bowl of the cup of my fury; thou shalt not continue to drink it any more. 23. And I put it into the hand of those that afflicted thee, that said to thy soul, Bow down and we will pass over; and thou didst lay thy back as the ground, and as the street for the passengers.

LII.—[However low the natural Israel may sink, the true Church shall become more glorious than ever, being freed from the impurities connected with her former state, ver. 1. This is described as a captivity from which she is exhorted to escape, ver. 2. Her emancipation is the fruit of God's gratuitous compassion, ver. 3. As a nation she has suffered long enough, vers. 4, 5. The day is coming when the Israel of God shall know in whom they have believed, ver. 6. The herald of the new dispensation is described as already visible upon the mountains, ver. 7. The very ruins of Jerusalem are summoned to rejoice, ver. 9. The glorious change is witnessed by the whole world. 10. The true Church or Israel of God is exhorted to come out of Jewry, ver. 11. This exodus is likened to the one from Egypt, but described as even more

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that thou shouldest be afraid of a man who will die, and of a son of man who is made a blade of grass; 13, that thou shouldest forget Jehovah thy Creator, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth; that thou shouldest be afraid continually all the day of the fury of the tormentor, as he aims to destroy? and where is the fury of the tormentor left? 14. He * that is bowed down is quickly set loose, and does not die to the grave, and his bread does not fail him; 15, as truly as I Jehovah am thy God, who frighteneth up the sea, so that its waves roar; Jehovah of hosts is His name. 16. And I put my words into thy mouth, and in the shadow of my hand have I covered thee, to plant heavens, and to found on earth, and to say to Zion, Thou art my people.

17. Wake thyself up, stand up, O Jerusalem; thou that hast drunk out of the hand of Jehovah the goblet of His fury; the goblet-cup of reeling hast thou drunk, sipped out. 18. There was none who guided her of all the children she had brought forth; and none who took her by the hand of all the children she had brought up. 19. There were two things that happened to thee; who should console thee? Desolation, and ruin, and famine, and the sword: how should I comfort thee? 20. Thy children were benighted, lay at the corners of all the streets like a snared antelope: as those who were full of the fury of Jehovah, the rebuke of thy God. 21. Therefore hearken to this, O wretched and drunken, but not with wine: 22, Thus saith thy Lord, Jehovah, and thy God that defendeth His people, Behold, I take out of thy hand the goblet-cup of my fury: thou shalt not continue to drink it any more. 23. And I put it into the hand of thy tormentors; who said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou madest thy back like the ground, and like a public way for those who go over it.

* He that was bent down hath made haste to be loosed, and he shall not die in the pit, neither shall his bread fail.—*Kay.*

† Who will mourn with thee?—*Kay.*

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auspicious, ver. 12. Its great leader, the Messiah, as the Servant of Jehovah, must be and is to be exalted, ver. 13. And this exaltation shall bear due proportion to the humiliation which preceded it, vers. 14, 15.]

1. Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion! Put on thy garments of beauty, O Jerusalem, the Holy City! For no more shall there continue to come into thee an uncircumcised and unclean (person). 2. Shake thyself from the dust, arise, sit, O Jerusalem! loose the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!

3. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Ye were sold for nought, and not for money shall ye be redeemed. 4. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Into Egypt went down my people at the first to sojourn there, and Assyria oppressed them for nothing. 5. And now what have I here, saith Jehovah, that my people is taken away for nothing, its rulers howl, saith Jehovah, and continually, all the day, my name is blasphemed? 6. Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day (shall they know) that I am He that said, Behold me!

7. How timely on the mountains are the feet of one bringing glad tidings, publishing peace, bringing tidings of good, publishing salvation, saying to Zion, Thy God reigneth! 8. The voice of thy watchmen! They raise the voice, together will they shout; for eye to eye will they see in Jehovah's returning to Zion. 9. Burst forth, shout together, ruins of Jerusalem! For Jehovah hath comforted His people, hath redeemed Jerusalem. 10. Jehovah hath bared His holy arm to the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

11. Away! away! go out from thence! the unclean touch not! come out from the midst of her! Be clean, ye armour-bearers of Jehovah. 12. For not in haste shall ye go out, and in flight ye shall not depart; for going before you (is) Jehovah, and bringing up your rear the God of Israel.

LII. 13.—[The great leader of this exodus, the Messiah, as the Servant of Jehovah, must be and is to be exalted, ver. 13. And this exaltation shall bear due proportion to the humiliation which preceded it, vers. 14, 15.

LIII.—Notwithstanding these and other prophecies of the Messiah, He is not recognised when He appears, ver. 1. He is not the object of desire and trust, for whom the great mass of the people have been waiting, ver. 2. Nay, His low condition, and especially His sufferings are vicarious, not accidental or incurred by His own fault, vers. 4–6. Hence, though personally innocent, He is perfectly unresisting, ver. 7. Even they for whom He suffers may mistake His person and His office, ver. 8. His case presents the two extremes of

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FOURTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LII. 1–12.

Jerusalem exchanges Servitude for Dominion, and Imprisonment for Liberty.

1. Awake, awake; clothe thyself in thy might, O Zion; clothe thyself in thy state dresses, O Jerusalem, thou holy city: for henceforth there shall no more enter into thee one uncircumcised and unclean! 2. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the dust, arise, sit down, O Jerusalem: loose * thyself from the chains of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!

3. For thus saith Jehovah, Ye have been sold for nothing, and ye shall not be redeemed with silver. 4. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, My people went down to Egypt in the beginning to dwell there as guests; and Asshur has oppressed it for nothing. 5. And now, what have I to do here? saith Jehovah; for my people are taken away for nothing; their oppressors shriek, saith Jehovah, and my name is continually blasphemed all the day. 6. Therefore my people shall learn my name; therefore, in that day, that I am He who saith, Here am I.

7. How lovely† upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings, that publish peace, that bring tidings of good, that publish salvation, that say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth royally! 8. Hark, thy watchers! They lift up the voice together; they rejoice: for they see eye to eye, how ‡ Jehovah bringeth Zion home. 9. Break out into exultation, sing together, ye ruins of Jerusalem. for Jehovah hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem. 10. Jehovah hath made bare His holy arm before the eyes of all nations, and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God.

11. Go ye forth, go ye forth, go out from thence, lay hold of no unclean thing; go ye out from the midst of her, cleanse yourselves, ye that bear the vessels of Jehovah. 12. For ye shall not go out in confusion, and ye shall not go forth in flight: for Jehovah goeth before you, and the God of Israel is your rearguard.

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* The bands of thy neck are unloosed.—*Kay.*

† How comely.—*Cheyne.*

‡ When Jehovah restoreth Zion.—*Jones.* When the Lord returneth to Zion.—*Kay.*

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righteous punishment and perfect innocence, ver. 9. But the glorious fruit of these very sufferings will correct all errors, ver. 10. He becomes a Saviour only by becoming a substitute, ver. 11. Even after the work of expiation is completed, and His glorious reward secured, the work of intercession will be still continued, ver. 12.]

13. Behold, my Servant shall do wisely, shall rise and be exalted and high exceedingly. 14. As many were shocked at Thee—so marred from man His look, and His form from the sons of men—15, so shall He sprinkle many nations; concerning Him shall kings stop their mouth, because what was not recounted to them they have seen, and what they had not heard they have perceived.

LIII.—1. Who hath believed our report? and the arm of Jehovah, to whom (or, upon whom) has it been revealed?

2. And He came up like the tender plant before Him, and like a root from a dry ground; He had no form nor comeliness, and we shall see Him, and no sight that we should desire it. 3. Despised and forsaken of men (or, ceasing from among men), a man of sorrows and acquainted with sickness, and like one hiding the face from Him (or, us), despised, and we esteemed Him not.

4. Surely our sicknesses He bore, and our griefs He carried; and we thought Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. 5. And He was pierced (or, wounded) for our transgression, bruised (or, crushed) for our iniquities; the chastisement (or, punishment) of our peace (was) upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed. 6. All we like sheep had gone astray, each to his own way we had turned, and Jehovah laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7. He was oppressed and He humbled Himself, and He will not open His mouth—as a lamb to the slaughter is brought, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb—and He will not open His mouth. 8. From distress and from judgment He was taken; and in His generation who will think, that He was cut off from the land of the living, for the transgression of my people (as) a curse for them? 9. And He gave with wicked (men) His grave, and with a rich (man) in His death; because (or, although) He had done no violence, and no deceit (was) in His mouth.

10. And Jehovah was pleased to crush (or, bruise Him), He put Him to grief (or, made Him sick); if (or, when) His soul shall make an offering for sin, He shall see (His) seed, He shall prolong (His) days, and the pleasure of Jehovah in His hand shall prosper. 11. From the labour of His soul (or, life) He shall see, He shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall

DELITZSCH AND MARTIN.

FIFTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LII. 13.–LIII.

Golgotha and Sheblemini (= Sit Thou at my right hand), *or, the exaltation of the Servant of Jehovah out of deep degradation.*

13. Behold, my Servant shall act wisely; He will come forth and arise, and be very high. 14. Just as many were astonished at Thee: so disfigured, His appearance was not human, and form not like that of the children of men: 15, so will He make many nations to tremble; kings will shut their mouths at Him! for* they see what has not been told them, and discover what they have not heard.

LIII.—1. Who hath believed our preaching; and the arm of Jehovah, over whom has it been revealed?

2. And He sprang up like a layer-shoot before Him, and like a root-sprout out of dry ground: He had no form, and no beauty; and we looked, and there was no look, such that we could have found pleasure in Him. 3. He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of griefs, and well acquainted with disease; and like one from whom men hide their face: despised, and we esteemed Him not.

4. Verily He hath borne our diseases and our pains! He hath laden them upon Himself; but we regarded Him as one stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5. Whereas He was pierced for our sins, bruised for our iniquities! the punishment was laid upon Him for our peace; and through His stripes we were healed. 6. All we like sheep went astray; we had turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

7. He† was ill-treated; whilst He suffered willingly, and opened not His mouth, like the sheep that is led to the slaughter-bench, and like a lamb that is dumb before its shearers, and opened not His mouth. 8. He‡ has been taken away from prison and from judgment; and of His generation who considered: "He was snatched away out of the land of the living; for the wickedness of my people punishment fell upon Him"? 9. And they assigned Him His grave with sinners, and with a rich man in His martyrdom, because He had done no wrong, and there was no deceit in His mouth.

10. And it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, to afflict Him with disease; if His soul would pay a trespass-offering, He should see posterity, should live long days, and the purpose of Jehovah should prosper through His hand. 11. Because of the travail of His soul, He will see, and be refreshed; through His knowledge

* For they to whom it had not been told shall see, and they which had not heard shall consider.—*Birks.*

† He was oppressed, yet He submitted Himself.—*Kay and Jones.*

‡ Through oppression and judgment was He taken away, and His life who will consider?—*Kay.*

CALKINS.*

CHAPS. LII. 13–LIII.

I.

13. Behold, my Servant shall prosper,
He shall rise up, and be extolled, and
stand triumphantly exalted.
14. Even as many were shocked at Him
(His countenance was so marred as to be
no more that of a man,
His form no more that of sons of men!)
15. So shall He sprinkle many nations.
The kings shall shut their mouths before
Him;
For what had not been told them they
shall see,
And what they never heard they shall
consider.

II.

1. Who hath believed our report?
And to whom is Jehovah's arm revealed?
2. For He shall grow up before Him as a
tender plant,
And as a sprout out of dry ground.
He hath no form nor comeliness that we
should look up to Him,
No beauty that we should take pleasure
in Him.
3. He is despised and rejected of men,
A man of sorrows, well acquainted with
sickness;
And like one hiding his face before us,
He was despised and we esteemed Him
not.
4. And yet it was our own sickness that He
bore,
And our sorrows that He loaded upon
Himself.
But we supposed He was punished,
Smitten of God and tormented!
5. Oh, no! He was wounded for our trans-
gressions,
Bruised for our inquities,
Chastisement for our peace was upon
Him,
And with His stripes we are made whole.
6. All we like sheep have gone astray,
We have turned every one to his own
way,
And Jehovah made the guilt of us all
to meet upon Him.
7. He was oppressed, and yet He humbled
Himself,
And He opened not His mouth, like a
lamb that is brought to the slaughter,
And as a sheep is dumb before her
shearers,
So He opened not His mouth.
8. He was dragged to punishment by vio-
lence, and yet by process of law;

URWICK.

THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH.†—CHAP. LII. 13–LIII. 12.

LII.—13. Behold! my Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high. 14. As many were astonied, so marred more than any man; His visage and His form more than the sons of men. 15. So shall He sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at Him, for that which hath not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

LIII.—1. Who hath believed our report? and the arm of the Lord to whom hath it been revealed? 2. For He grew up as a tender plant before Him, and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness that we should regard Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him. 3. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And there was, as it were, the hiding of the face from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

4. Surely *our* griefs HE hath borne, and *our* sorrows HE hath carried them; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5. But HE was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of OUR peace (or, our peace, chastisement) was upon HIM; and with His stripes we are healed. 6. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; as the lamb to the slaughter, He was brought; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. 8. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who considereth His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was He stricken. 9. And they made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, neither was there deceit in His mouth. 10. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief.

When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for guilt (or, a guilt-offering), He shall see (His) seed, He shall prolong (His) days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. 11. Because of the travail of His soul

* Dickinson's Theological Quarterly, vol. iv. pp. 19-30: *Article*, "The Great Messianic Prophecy," by the Rev. Wolcott Calkins, D.D.

† The Servant of Jehovah. A Commentary, Grammatical and Critical, upon Isaiah lii. 13–liii. 12. By William Urwick, M.A., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

ALEXANDER.

my servant (as) a righteous one, give righteousness to many, and their iniquities He will bear. 12. Therefore will I divide to Him among the many, and with the strong shall He divide the spoil, in lieu of this that He bared unto death His soul, and with the transgressors was numbered, and He (Himself) bare the sin of many, and for the transgressors He shall make intercession.

DELITZSCH AND MARTIN.

will He procure justice, my righteous servant, for the many, and will take their iniquities upon Himself. 12. Therefore I give Him a portion among the great, and with strong ones will He divide the spoil; because He has poured out His soul into death: and He let Himself be reckoned among transgressors; whilst He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

LIV.—[Instead of suffering from the loss of her national prerogatives, the Church shall be more glorious and productive than before, ver. 1. Instead of being limited to a single nation, she shall be so extended as to take in all the nations of the earth, vers. 2, 3. What seemed at first to be her forlorn and desolate condition shall be followed by a glorious change, ver. 4. He who seemed to be the God of the Jews only shall now be seen to be the God of the Gentiles also, ver. 5. The abrogation of the old economy was like the repudiation of a wife, but its effects will show it to be rather a renewal of the conjugal relation, ver. 6. The momentary rejection shall be followed by an everlasting reconciliation, vers. 7, 8. The old economy, like Noah's flood, can never be repeated, ver. 9. That was a temporary institution; this shall outlast the earth itself, ver. 10. The old Jerusalem shall be forgotten in the splendour of the new, vers. 11, 12. But this shall be a spiritual splendour, springing from a constant divine influence, ver. 13. Hence it shall be also a holy and a safe state, ver. 14. All the enemies of the Church shall either be destroyed or received into her bosom, ver. 15. The warrior and his weapons are alike God's creatures and at His disposal, ver. 16. In every conflict, both of hand and tongue, the Church shall be triumphant, not in her own right or her own strength, but in that of Him who justifies, pardons, and saves her, ver. 17.]

1. Shout, O barren, that didst not bear; break forth into a shout and cry aloud, thou that didst not writhe (in childbirth): for more (are) the children of the desolate than the children of the married (woman), saith Jehovah. 2. Widen the place of thy tent, and the curtains of thy dwelling let them stretch out; spare not (or, hinder it not); lengthen thy cords and strengthen (or, make fast) thy stakes. 3. For right and left shalt thou break forth (or, spread), and thy seed shall possess (or, dispossess or inherit) nations, and repeople ruined (or, forsaken) cities.

4. Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; and be not abashed, for thou shalt not blush; for the shame of thy youth thou shalt forget, and the reproach of thy widowhood thou shalt not remember any more. 5. For thy hus-

SIXTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LIV.

The glory of Jerusalem, the Church of the Servants of Jehovah.

1. Exult, O barren one, thou that didst not bear; break forth into exulting, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for there are more children of the solitary one than children of the married wife, saith Jehovah. 2. Enlarge the space of thy tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of thy habitations; forbid not! lengthen thy cords, and fasten thy plugs. 3. For thou wilt break forth on the right and on the left; and thy seed will take possession of nations, and they will people desolate cities.

4. Fear not, for thou wilt not be put to shame; and bid defiance to reproach, for thou wilt not blush: no, thou wilt not blush: no, thou wilt forget the shame of thy youth, and wilt no more remember the reproach of thy widowhood. 5. For thy husband is thy Crea-

CALKINS.

And who of the men of His generation took it to heart,
That He was cut off from the land of the living,
That the stroke for my people's transgression fell upon Him!
9. They appointed Him His grave with criminals
(Still He was with a rich man in His death!),
Although He had done no wrong,
Neither was any deceit in His mouth.
10. And yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him;
He laid sickness upon Him.
But when He has made over His soul as a sin-offering,
He shall see offspring; He shall prolong His days,
And the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hands!

III.

11. Free from the travail of His soul,
He shall see and be satisfied.
By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant make many righteous,
Because He shall bear their iniquities.
12. Therefore will I give Him the great as a portion,
And He shall distribute the strong as spoil.
For He hath poured out His soul unto death,
And He was numbered with transgressors,
While He was bearing the sin of many
And was making intercession for the transgressors.

URWICK.

He shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify the many, for their iniquities He shall bear. 12. Therefore will I divide Him a portion in the many [*i.e.*, the many shall be the portion allotted to Him], and with the strong shall He divide the spoil; for in that He poured out His soul unto the death, and was numbered with the transgressors, He Himself bare the sin of the many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

ALEXANDER.

band (is) thy Maker, Jehovah of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer (is) the Holy One of Israel, the God of all the earth shall He be called. 6. For as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit has Jehovah called thee, and (as) a wife of youth, for she shall be rejected, said thy God. 7. In a little moment I forsook thee, and in great mercies I will gather thee. 8. In a gush of wrath I hid my face for a moment from thee, and in everlasting kindness I have had mercy on thee, saith thy Redeemer, Jehovah. 9. For the waters of Noah is this to me; what I sware from the waters of Noah passing again over the earth [*i.e.*, that they should not pass], so have I sworn from being angry [that I will not be angry] against thee, and from rebuking [that I will not] rebuke thee. 10. For the mountains shall move and the hills shall shake; but my favour from thee shall not move, and my covenant of peace shall not shake, saith thy pitier, Jehovah. 11. Wretched, storm-

DELITZSCH AND MARTIN.

tor; Jehovah of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; God of the whole earth is He called. 6. For Jehovah calleth thee as a wife forsaken and burdened with sorrow, and as a wife of youth,* when once she is despised, saith thy God.

7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, and with great mercy will I gather thee. 8. In an effusion of anger I hid my face from thee for a moment, and with everlasting grace I have compassion upon thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer. 9. For it is now as at the waters of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah should not overflow the earth any more; so have I sworn not to be wroth with thee, and not to threaten thee. 10. For the mountains may depart, and the hills may shake; my grace will not depart from thee, and my covenant of peace will not shake, saith Jehovah who hath compassion on thee. 11. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, not com-

* When she is cast off.—*Kay.* (Grieving) because she is rejected.—*Birks.*

ALEXANDER.

tossed, comfortless! Behold, I am laying (or, about to lay) thy stones in antimony, and I will found thee upon sapphires; 12, and I will make thy battlements (or, pinnacles) ruby, and thy gates to (be) sparkling gems, and all thy borders to (be) stones of pleasure (or delight). 13. And all thy children disciples of Jehovah, and great (or, plentiful) the peace of thy children. 14. In righteousness shalt thou be established: be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear, and from destruction, for it shall not come near to thee. 15. Lo, they shall gather, they shall gather, not at my sign (or, signal). Who has gathered against thee? He shall fall away to thee. 16. Lo, I have created the smith, blowing into the fire of coal, and bringing out a weapon for his work; and I have created the wasters to destroy. 17. Every weapon (that) shall be formed against thee shall not prosper, and every tongue that shall rise with thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness from me, saith Jehovah.

LV.—[By the removal of the old restrictions, the Church is, for the first time, open to the whole world, as the source or medium of the richest blessings, ver. 1. It is only here that real nourishment can be obtained, ver. 2. Life is made sure by an oath and covenant, ver. 3. The Messiah is a witness of the truth and a commander of the nations, ver. 4. As such He will be recognised by many nations who before knew nothing of the true religion, ver. 5. These are now addressed directly, and exhorted to embrace the offered opportunity, ver. 6. To this there is every encouragement afforded in the divine mercy, ver. 7. The infinite disparity between God and man should have the same effect, instead of hindering it, vers. 8, 9. The commands and promises of God must be fulfilled, vers. 10, 11. Nothing, therefore, can prevent a glorious change in the condition of the world under the dispensation of the Spirit, ver. 12. This blessed renovation, being directly promotive of God's glory, shall endure for ever, ver. 13.]

1. Ho, every thirsty one, come ye to the waters; and he to whom there is no money, come ye, buy (food) and eat; and come, buy, without money and without price, wine and milk. 2. Why will ye weigh money for (that which is) not bread, and your labour for (that which is) not to satiety? Hearken, hearken unto me, and eat (that which is) good, and your soul shall enjoy itself in

DELITZSCH AND MARTIN.

forted, behold I lay thy stones in stibium,* [i.e. antimony], and lay thy foundations with sapphires; 12, and make thy minarets of ruby, and thy gates into carbuncles, and all thy boundary into jewels.

13. And all thy children will be the learned of Jehovah; and great the peace of thy children. 14. Through righteousness wilt thou be fortified: be far from anxiety, for thou hast nothing to fear; and from terror, for it will not come near thee. 15. Behold, men crowd together in crowds; my will is not there. Who crowd together against thee?—he shall fall by thee.

16. † Behold, I have created the smith who bloweth the coal-fire, and brings to the light a weapon according to his trade; and I † have created the destroyer to destroy. 17. Every weapon formed against thee has no success, and every tongue that cometh before the judgment with thee thou wilt condemn. This is the inheritance of the servants of Jehovah; and their righteousness from me, saith Jehovah.

SEVENTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LV.

Come and take the sure Salvation of Jehovah.

1. Alas, all ye thirsty ones, come ye to the water; and ye that have no silver, come ye, buy and eat! Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without payment! 2. Wherefore do ye weigh silver for that which is not bread, and the result of your labour for that which satisfieth not? Oh, hearken ye to me, and eat the good, and let your soul delight itself in fat.

* I am laying thy stones with fair adornment. —*Birks.* I will lay thy stones in cement of brilliant colour.—*Jones.* "Same word as in 1 Chron. xxix. 2 (A. V. glistering [stones]): probably, stones used for mosaic work (so Targ. here); as black marble, &c. In the two other places where the word occurs (2 Kings ix. 30; Jer. iv. 30), it denotes the paint which was used by females for colouring the edges of the eyelids. Grotius notices (from Jos. 'J. W.' v. 5) that the open court of the temple had a tessellated floor."—*Kay.*

† Behold, it is *I* who create the smith. . . . And it is *I* who create the waster to destroy — *Revised English Bible* and *Cheyne.*

ALEXANDER.

fatness. 3. Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live (or, let it live), and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David. 4. Lo, (as) a witness of nations I have given Him, a chief and commander of nations. 5. Lo, a nation (that) thou knowest not shalt thou call, and a nation (that) have not known thee shall run unto thee, for the sake of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for He hath glorified thee.

6. Seek ye Jehovah while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and let him return unto Jehovah, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God for He will abundantly pardon (literally, multiply to pardon). 8. For my thoughts (are) not as your thoughts, nor your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. 9. For (as) the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and thither returneth not, but when it has watered the earth and made it bear and put forth, and has given seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11, so shall my word be, which goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void (or, without effect), but when it has done that which I desired, and successfully done that for which I sent it. 12. For with joy shall ye go forth, and in peace shall ye be led; the mountains and the hills shall break out before you into a shout, and all the trees of the field shall clap the hand. 13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress, and instead of the nettle shall come up the myrtle, and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

LVI.—[The day is coming when the righteousness of God is to be fully revealed, without the veils and shackles which had hitherto confined it, ver. 1. For this great change, the best preparation is fidelity to the spirit of the old economy, ver. 2. No personal or national distinctions will be any longer recognised, ver. 3. Connection with the Church will no longer be a matter of hereditary right, vers. 4, 5. The Church shall be henceforth coextensive with the world, vers. 6–8. But first the carnal Israel must be abandoned to its enemies, ver. 9. Its rulers are neither able nor worthy to deliver the people or themselves, vers. 10–12.]

1. Thus saith Jehovah, Keep ye judgment (or justice) and do righteousness; for near (is) my salvation to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. 2. Happy the man (that) shall do this, and the son of man that shall hold it fast, keeping the Sabbath from profaning it, and keeping his hand from doing evil.

DELITZSCH AND MARTIN.

3. Incline your ear, and come to me! hear, and let your soul revive; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the true mercies of David. 4. Behold, I have set him as a witness * for nations, a prince and commander of nations. 5. Behold, thou wilt call a mass of people that thou knowest not; and a mass of people that knoweth thee not will hasten to thee, for the sake of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel that He hath made thee glorious.

6. Seek ye Jehovah while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to Jehovah, and He will have compassion upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah: 9, as heaven is high above the earth; so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts. 10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, till it has moistened the earth, and fertilised it, and made it green, and offered seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will my word be which goeth forth out of my mouth: it will not return to me fruitless, till it has accomplished that which I willed, and prosperously carried out that for which I sent it. 12. For ye will go out with joy, and be led forth † in peace: the mountains and the hills will break out before you into shouting, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. 13. Instead of the thorn will cypresses shoot up, and instead of the fleabane ‡ will myrtles spring up: and it will be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting memorial that will not be swept away.

EIGHTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LVI. 1–8.

Sabbatical Admonitions, and Consolations for Proselytes and Eunuchs.

1. Thus saith Jehovah, Keep ye right, and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to reveal itself. 2. Blessed is the mortal that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth fast hold thereon; who keepeth the Sabbath, that he doth not desecrate it, and keepeth his hand from doing any kind of evil.

* A lawgiver.—*Arnold.*

† And be led on with peace.—*Jones.*

‡ Nettle.—*Cheyne.*

ALEXANDER.

3. And let not the foreigner say, who has joined himself unto Jehovah, saying, Jehovah will separate me wholly from His people; and let not the eunuch say, Lo, I am a dry tree. 4. For thus saith Jehovah to (or, as to) the eunuchs, who shall keep my Sabbaths, and shall choose what I delight in, and take fast hold of my covenant, 5. I will give to them in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than sons and than daughters; an everlasting name will I give to him, which shall not be cut off. 6. And (as to) the foreigners joining themselves to Jehovah to serve Him and to love the name of Jehovah, to be to Him for servants, every one keeping the Sabbath from profaning it, and holding fast my covenant; 7. I will bring them to my mount of holiness, and make them joyful in my house of prayer, their offerings and their sacrifices (shall be) to acceptance on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. 8. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, the gatherer of the outcasts of Israel, Still (more) will I gather upon him (in addition) to his gathered.

9. All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, all ye beasts in the forest! 10. His watchmen (are) blind all of them, they have not known (or, do not know); all of them (are) dumb dogs, they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. 11. And the dogs are greedy, they know not satiety, and they, the shepherds (or, the shepherds themselves), know not how to distinguish (or, act wisely); all of them to their own way are turned, (every) man to his own gain from his own quarter (or, without exception). 12. Come ye, I will fetch wine, and we will intoxicate ourselves with strong drink, and like to-day (shall be) to-morrow, great, abundantly, exceedingly.

LVII.—[The righteous who died under the old economy were taken away from the evil to come, vers. 1, 2. The wicked who despised them were themselves proper objects of contempt, vers. 3, 4. Their idolatry is first described in literal terms, vers. 5, 6. It is then represented as a spiritual idolatry, vers. 7–9. Their obstinate persistence in sin is represented as the cause of their hopeless and remediless destruction, vers. 10–13. A way is prepared for spiritual Israel to come out from among them, ver. 14. The hopes of true believers shall not be deferred for ever, vers. 15, 16. Even these must be chastened for their sins, ver. 17. But there is favour in reserve for all true penitents, without regard to national distinctions, vers. 18, 19. To the incorrigible sinner, on the other hand, peace is impossible, vers. 20, 21.]

1. The righteous perisheth, and there is no man laying (it) to heart, and men of mercy are taken away, with none considering (or

DELITZSCH AND MARTIN.

3. And let not the foreigner, who hath joined himself to Jehovah, speak thus: Assuredly Jehovah will cut me off from His people; and let not the eunuch say, I am only a dry tree. 4. For thus saith Jehovah to the eunuchs, Those who keep my Sabbaths, and decide for that in which I take pleasure, and take fast hold of my covenant; 5. I give to them in my house and within my walls a memorial* and a name better than sons and daughters; I give such a man an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. 6. And the foreigners, who have joined themselves to Jehovah, to serve Him, and to love the name of Jehovah, to be His servants, whoever keepeth the Sabbath from desecrating it, and those who hold fast to my covenant; 7. I bring them to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their whole-offerings and their slain-offerings are well-pleasing upon mine altar; for my house, a house of prayer shall it be called for all nations. 8. Word of the Lord, Jehovah: gathering the outcasts of Israel, I will also gather beyond itself to its gathered ones.

NINTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LVI. 9–LVII. 21.

Neglect of Duty by the Leaders of Israel; and Errors of the People.

9. All ye beasts of the field, come near! To devour, all ye beasts of the forest! 10. His watchmen are blind: they (are) all ignorant,† they (are) all dumb dogs that cannot bark; raving, lying down, loving to slumber. 11. And the dogs are mightily greedy, they know no satiety; and such are shepherds! They know no understanding; they have all turned to their own ways, every one for his own gain throughout his border.

12. Come here, I will fetch wine, and let us drink meth; and to-morrow shall be like to-day, great, excessively abundant.

LVII.—1. The righteous perisheth, and no man taketh it to heart; and pious‡ men are swept away,§ without any one considering that

* "Trophy."—*Cheyne.* "Place."—*Arnold, Birks, Strachey.*
† "Without knowledge."—*Kay, Strachey.* "Undiscerning."—*Cheyne.*
‡ "Godly men."—*Jones.* "Gracious men."—*Kay.*
§ "Gathered."—*Cheyne.* "Gathered in."—*Kay.*

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perceiving) that from the presence of evil the righteous is taken away. 2. He shall go in peace (or, enter into peace); they shall rest upon their beds—walking straight before him.

3. And ye (or, as for you), draw near hither, ye sons of the witch, seed of the adulterer and the harlot. 4. At whom do ye amuse yourselves? At whom do ye enlarge the mouth, prolong the tongue? Are ye not children of rebellion (or, apostasy), a seed of falsehood? 5. Inflamed (or, inflaming yourselves) among the oaks (or, terebinths), under every green tree, slaughtering the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks. 6. Among the smooth (stones) of the valley (or, the brook) is thy portion; they, they are thy lot; also to them hast thou poured out a drink-offering, thou hast brought up a meat-offering. Shall I for these things be consoled (*i.e.*, satisfied without revenge)?

7. On a high and elevated mountain thou hast placed thy bed; also there (or, even thither) hast thou gone up to offer sacrifice. 8. And behind the door and the door-post thou hast placed thy memorial, far away from me thou hast uncovered (thyself or thy bed), and hast gone up, thou hast enlarged thy bed and hast covenanted from them, thou hast loved their bed, thou hast provided room. 9. And thou hast gone to the king in oil, and hast multiplied thine unguents, and hast sent thine ambassadors even to a far-off (land), and hath gone (or, sent) down even to hell.

10. In the greatness of thy way (or, the abundance of thy travel) thou hast labour; (but) thou hast not said, There is no hope. Thou hast found the life of thy hand; therefore thou art not weak. 11. And whom hast thou feared and been afraid of, that thou shouldest lie? And me thou hast not remembered, thou hast not called to mind (or, laid to heart). Is it not (because) I hold my peace, and that of old, that thou wilt not fear me? 12. I will declare thy righteousness and thy works, and they shall not profit (or, avail thee. 13. In thy crying (*i.e.*, when thou criest for help), let thy gatherings save thee! And (yet) all of them the wind shall take up, and a breath shall take away, and the (one) trusting in me shall inherit the land and possess my holy mountain.

14. And he shall say, Cast up, cast up, clear the way, take up the stumbling-block from the way of my people! 15. For thus saith the High and Exalted One, inhabiting eternity, and Holy is His name: On high and holy will I dwell, and with the broken and humble of spirit, to revive the

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the righteous is swept away from misfortune.* 2. He entereth into peace: they rest upon their beds, whoever has walked straight before him.

3. And ye, draw near hither, children of the sorceress, seed of the adulterer, and of her that committed whoredom! 4. Over whom do ye make yourselves merry? Over whom do ye open the mouth wide, and put the tongue out long? Are ye not the brood of apostasy, seed of lying? 5. Ye that inflame yourselves by the terebinths, under every green tree, ye slayers of children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks. 6. By the smooth ones of the brook was thy portion; they, they were thy lot: thou also pouredst out libations to them, thou laidst meat-offerings upon them. Shall I be contented with this?† 7. Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set up thy bed; thou also ascendest thither to offer slain offerings. 8. And behind the door and the post thou didst place thy ‡ reminder: for thou uncoveredst away from me, and ascendedst; thou madest thy bed broad, and didst stipulate for thyself what they had to do: thou lovedst their lying with thee; thou sawest their manhood.§

9. And thou wentest to the king with oil, and didst measure copiously thy spices, and didst send thy messengers to a great distance, and didst deeply abase thyself, even to Hades. 10. Thou didst become weary of the greatness of thy way; yet thou saidst not, It is unattainable: ‖ thou obtainedst the reward of thy strength: therefore thou wast not pained.¶

11. And of whom hast thou been afraid, and (whom) didst thou fear, that thou becamest a liar, and didst not continue mindful of me, and didst not take it to heart?

Am I not silent, and that for a long time, whereas thou wast not afraid of me? 12. I, I will proclaim thy righteousness; and thy works, they will not profit thee. 13. When thou criest, let thy heaps of idols** save thee: but a wind carries them all away; a breath takes them off; and whoever putteth trust in me will inherit the land, and take possession of my holy mountain.

14. And He saith, Heap up, heap up, prepare a way, take away every obstruction from the way of my people. 15. For thus saith the High and Lofty One, the eternally dwelling One, He whose name is Holy One; I dwell on high and in the holy place, and with the contrite one and him that is of a humbled spirit, to revive the spirit of humbled ones, and to revive the heart of contrite

* "Out of the way of evil."—*Kay, Jones.*

† "Shall I for all these things relent?"—*Kay.* "Shall I by these things be appeased?"—*Birks.* "Comforted."—*Jones, Arnold.* "Should I quiet myself in spite of these things?"—*Cheyne.*

‡ "Thy own remembrance."—*Kay.*

§ "And thou hast sought occasion."—*Birks.* "Thou hast beheld the phallus."—*Cheyne.*

‖ "There is no result."—*Cheyne.*

¶ "Thou hast yet found strength in thine hand, therefore thou wast not discouraged."—*Arnold.* "Thou didst get renewal of thy strength, therefore thou feltest not weak."—*Cheyne.*

** "Thy medley of gods."—*Cheyne.*

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spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the broken (or, contrite ones). 16. For not to eternity will I contend, and not to perpetuity will I be wroth; for the spirit from before me will faint, and the souls (which) I have made.

17. For his covetous iniquity I am wroth and will smite him, (I will) hide me and will be wroth; for he has gone on turning away (*i.e.*, persevering in apostasy) in the way of his heart (or, of his own inclination). 18. His ways I have seen, and I will heal him, and will guide him, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. 19. Creating the fruit of the lips, Peace, peace to the far off and to the near, saith Jehovah, and I heal him.

20. And the wicked (are) like the troubled sea, for rest it cannot, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. 21. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

LVIII.—[The rejection of Israel as a nation is the just reward of their unfaithfulness, ver. 1. Their religious services are hyprocritical, ver. 2. Their mortifications and austerities are nullified by accompanying wickedness, vers. 3–5. They should have been connected with the opposite virtues, vers. 6, 7. In that case they would have continued to enjoy the divine favour, vers. 8, 9. They are still invited to make trial of this course, with an ample promise of prosperity and blessing to encourage them, vers. 10–14.]

1. Cry with the throat, spare not, like the trumpet raise thy voice, and tell to my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins.

2. And me day (by) day they will seek, and the knowledge of my ways they will delight in (or, desire), like a nation which has done right, and the judgment of its God has not forsaken; they will ask of me righteous judgments, the approach to God (or, of God) they will delight in (or, desire).

3. Why have we fasted, and Thou hast not seen (it)? afflicted our soul (or, ourselves) and Thou wilt not know (it)? Behold in the day of your fast ye will find pleasure, and all your labours ye will exact. 4. Behold, for strife and contention ye will fast, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not (or, ye will not) fast to-day (so as) to make your voice heard on high. 5. Shall it be like this, the fast that I will choose, the day of man's humbling himself? Is it to hang his head like a bulrush, and make sackcloth and ashes his bed? Wilt thou call this a fast, and a day of acceptance (an acceptable day) to Jehovah?

6. Is not this the fast that I will choose, to loosen bands of wickedness, to undo the fastenings of the yoke, and to send away the crushed (or broken) free, and every yoke ye shall

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ones. 16. For I do not contend for ever, and I am not angry for ever: for the spirit would pine away before me, and the souls of men which I have created. 17. And because of the iniquity of its selfishness,* I was wroth, and smote it; hiding myself and being angry: then it went on, turning away in the way of its own heart. 18. I have seen its ways and will heal it; and will lead it, and afford consolations to it, and to its mourning ones.

19. Creating fruit of the lips; Jehovah saith, "Peace, peace to those that are far off, and to those that are near; and I heal it." 20. But the wicked are like the sea that is cast up; for it cannot rest; and its waters cast out slime and mud. 21. There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked.

PART III.

FIRST PROPHECY.—CHAP. LVIII.

The False Worship and the True.

1. Cry with full throat, hold not back; lift up thy voice like a bugle, and proclaim to my people their apostasy, and to the house of Jacob their sins. 2. And they seek me† day by day, and desire to learn my ways, like a nation which has done righteousness, and has not forsaken the right of their God; they ask of me judgments of righteousness; they desire the drawing near of Elohim.

3. Wherefore do we fast and Thou seest not, afflict our soul and Thou regardest not? Behold, on the day of your fasting ye carry on your business, and ye oppress all your labourers. 4. Behold, ye fast with strife and quarrelling, and with smiting of the fist maliciously closed: ye do not fast now to make your voice audible on high.‡

5. Can such things as these pass for a fast that I have pleasure in, as a day for a man to afflict his soul? To bow down his head like a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under him—dost thou call this a fast and an acceptable day for Jehovah? 6. Is not this a fast that I have pleasure in: to loose coils of wickedness, to untie the bands§ of the yoke, and for sending away the oppressed as free, and that ye break every kind of yoke? 7. Is it not this, to break thy bread to the hungry, and to take the poor and houseless to

* "For his unjust gain," lit. "for the iniquity of his gain."—*Cheyne.*

† "Me they consult daily."—*Cheyne.*

‡ "Ye shall not fast as ye do now, to make your outcry to be heard on high."—*Birks.* "Ye do not so fast at this time so as to make your voice to be heard in the height."—*Cheyne.*

§ "Thongs."—*Kay, Cheyne.*

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break? 7. Is it not to break unto the hungry thy bread? and the afflicted, the homeless, thou shalt bring home; for thou shalt see one naked and shalt clothe him, and from thine own flesh thou shalt not hide thyself.

8. Then shall break forth as the dawn thy light, and thy healing speedily shall spring up; then shall go before thee thy righteousness, and the glory of Jehovah shall be thy rereward (or, bring up thy rear). 9. Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry, and He will say, Behold me (here I am), if thou wilt put away from the midst of thee the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and the speaking of vanity.

10. And (if) thou wilt let out thy soul to the hungry, and the afflicted soul will satisfy, then shall thy light arise in the darkness, and thy gloom as the (double light or) noon. 11. And Jehovah will guide thee ever, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and thy bones shall He invigorate, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters shall not fail. 12. And they shall build from thee the ruins of antiquity (or, perpetuity), foundations of age and age (*i.e.*, of ages) shalt thou raise up: and it shall be called to thee (or, thou shalt be called) Repairer of the breach, Restorer of paths for dwelling.

13. If thou wilt turn away thy foot from the Sabbath to do thy pleasure on my holy day, and wilt call the Sabbath a delight (and) the holy (day) of Jehovah honourable, and wilt honour it by not doing thy own ways, by not finding thy pleasure and talking talk; 14. then shalt thou be happy in Jehovah, and I will make thee ride upon the heights of the earth, and I will make thee eat the heritage of Jacob thy father, for Jehovah's mouth hath spoken it.

LIX.—[The fault of Israel's rejection is not in the Lord, but in themselves, vers. 1, 2. They are charged with sins of violence and injustice, vers. 3, 4. The ruinous effects of these corruptions are described, vers. 5, 6. Their violence and injustice are fatal to themselves as to others, vers. 7, 8. The moral condition of the people is described as one of darkness and hopeless degradation, vers. 9–15. In this extremity, Jehovah interposes to deliver the true Israel, vers. 16, 17. This can only be effected by the destruction of the carnal Israel, ver. 18. The divine presence shall no longer be subjected to local restrictions, ver. 19. A redeemer shall appear in Zion to save the true Israel, ver. 20. The old dispensation shall give place to the dispensation of the Word and Spirit, which shall last for ever, ver. 21.]

1. Behold, not shortened is Jehovah's hand from saving, and not benumbed is His ear

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thy home; * when thou seest a naked man that thou clothest him, and dost not deny thyself before thine own flesh?

8. Then will thy light break forth as the morning dawn, and thy healing will sprout up speedily, and thy righteousness will go before thee, the glory of Jehovah will follow thee. 9. Then wilt thou call, and Jehovah will answer; thou wilt beseech, and He will say, Here am I.

If thou put away from the midst of thee the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and speaking of evil, 10, and offerest up thy gluttony to the hungry,† and satisfiest the soul that is bowed down: thy light will stream out in the darkness, and thy darkness become like the brightness of noon-day. 11. And Jehovah will guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in droughts, and refresh thy bones; and thou wilt become like a well-watered garden, and like a fountain, whose waters never deceive.‡ 12. And thy people § will build ruins of the olden time, foundations of earlier generations wilt thou erect; and men will call thee Repairer of breaches, Restorer of habitable streets.

13. If thou hold back thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy business on my holy day, and callest the Sabbath a delight, the holy of Jehovah, reverend, and honourest it, not doing thine own ways, not pursuing thy business and speaking words: ‖ 14. then wilt thou have delight in Jehovah, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the land, and make thee enjoy the inheritance of Jacob thy forefather, for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

SECOND PROPHECY.—CHAP. LIX.

The Existing Wall of Partition broken down at last.

1. Behold, Jehovah's hand is not too short to help, nor His ear too heavy to hear; 2.

* "And that thou bring miserable outcasts to their home."—*Cheyne.* "To thine house."—*Birks, Arnold.*

† "And minister thy sustenance to the hungry."—*Cheyne.*

‡ "Disappoint not."—*Kay, Cheyne.*

§ "And thy children shall build up the ancient ruins."—*Cheyne.*

‖ "So as not to do after thy word, nor pursue thy business, nor speak words."—*Cheyne.* "Nor using idle talk."—*Jones, Birks.*

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from hearing. 2. But your iniquities have been separating between you and your God, and your sins have hid (His) face from you, so as not to hear.

3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken falsehood, your tongue will utter wickedness. 4. There is none calling with justice, and there is none contending with truth; they trust in vanity and speak falsehood, conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity. 5. Eggs of the basilisk they have hatched, and webs of the spider they will spin (or, weave); the one eating their eggs shall die, and the crushed (egg) shall hatch out a viper. 6. Their webs shall not become (or, be for) clothing, and they shall not cover themselves with their works: their works are works of mischief (or, iniquity), and the doing of violence is in their hands. 7. Their feet to evil will run, and they will hasten to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of mischief (or, iniquity); wasting and ruin are in their paths. 8. The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their paths; their courses they have rendered crooked for them; every one walking in them knows not peace.

9. Therefore is judgment far from us, and righteousness will not overtake us; we wait for light, and behold darkness; for splendours, (and) in obscurities we walk. 10. We grope like the blind for the wall, like the eyeless we grope; we stumble at noon-day as in twilight, in thick darkness like the dead. 11. We growl like the bears, all of us, and like the doves we moan; we wait for justice and there is none, for salvation (and) it is far from us. 12. For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and our iniquities—we know them; 13. to transgress and lie against Jehovah, and to turn back from behind our God, to speak oppression and departure, to conceive and utter from the heart words of falsehood. 14. And judgment is thrust (or, driven) back, and righteousness afar off stands; for truth is fallen in the street, and uprightness cannot enter. 15. Then truth was missed (*i.e.* found wanting), and whoso departed from evil made himself a prey (or, was plundered).

Then Jehovah saw it, and it was evil in His eyes that there was no judgment (or, practical justice). 16. And He saw that there was no man, and He stood aghast that there was no one interposing; and His own arm saved for Him, and His own righteousness, it upheld

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but your iniquities have become a party-wall between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear. 3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips speak lies, your tongue murmurs wickedness.

4. No one speaks with justice, and no one pleads with faithfulness; men trust in vanity, and speak with deception;* they conceive trouble, and bring forth ruin. 5. They hatch basilisks' eggs, and weave spiders' webs. He that eateth of their eggs must die; and if one is trodden upon, it splits into an adder. 6. Their webs do not suffice for clothing,† and men cannot cover themselves with their works: their works are works of ruin, and the practice of injustice is in their hands. 7. Their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of wickedness; wasting and destruction are in their paths. 8. The way of peace they know not, and there is no right in their roads: they make their paths crooked: every one who treads upon them knows no peace.

9. Therefore right remains far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold darkness; for brightness—we walk in thick darkness. 10. We grope along the wall like the blind, and like eyeless men we grope: we stumble in the light of noon-day as in the darkness, and among the living like the dead.‡ 11. We roar all like bears, and moan deeply like doves: we hope for right, and it cometh not; for salvation—it remaineth far from us.

12. For our transgressions are many before Thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are known to us, and our evil deeds well known: 13. apostasy and denial of Jehovah, and turning back from following our God, oppressive and false speaking,§ conceiving and giving out from the heart words of falsehood. 14. And right is forced back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the market-place,‖ and honesty finds no admission. 15. And truth became missing, and he who avoids evil is outlawed.

And Jehovah saw it, and it was displeasing in His eyes, that there was no right. 16. And He saw that there was not a man anywhere, and was astonished that there was nowhere an intercessor: then His arm brought him help and His righteousness became His stay. 17. And He put on righteousness as a coat of mail, and the helmet of salvation upon His

* "None preferreth his suit with trustfulness, and none pleadeth with honesty; they trust in chaos, and speak emptiness."—*Cheyne.* "None calleth (on me) in righteousness."—*Birks, Kay.* "None pronounceth a verdict in justice."—*Jones.*

† "Their webs will not serve for clothing."—*Cheyne.*

‡ "Amidst those full of life (?) as dead men."—*Cheyne.* "Amidst dark places, like the dead."—*Kay.* "Amid rich abundance are like the dead."—*Birks, Jones.* "We are in desolate places as dead men."—*Arnold, Strachey.*

§ "Speaking oppression and untruth."—*Kay.* "Speaking perverseness and transgression."—*Cheyne.*

‖ "Truth hath stumbled in the broad place."—*Cheyne.*

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Him. 17. And He clothed Himself with righteousness as a coat of mail, and a helmet of salvation on His head, and He clothed Himself with garments of vengeance (for) clothing, and put on, as the cloak (or tunic), jealousy. 18. According to (their) deeds, according will He repay, wrath to His enemies, (their) desert to His foes, to the isles (their) desert will He repay. 19. And they shall fear from the west the name of Jehovah, and from the rising of the sun His glory; for it shall come like a straitened stream, the spirit of Jehovah raising a banner in it.

20. Then shall come for Zion a Redeemer, and for the converts from apostasy in Jacob, saith Jehovah. 21. And I (or, as for me)—this (is) my covenant with them, saith Jehovah. My Spirit which is on thee, and my words which I have placed in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and for ever (or, from now and to eternity).

LX. [The prophet describes the approaching change as a new and divine light rising upon Zion, ver. 1. He contrasts it with the darkness of surrounding nations, ver. 2. Yet these are not excluded from participation in the light, ver. 3. The elect in every nation are the children of the Church, and shall be gathered to her, vers. 4, 5. On one side he sees the Oriental caravans and flocks approaching, vers. 6, 7. On the other, the commercial fleets of western nations, vers. 8, 9. What seemed rejection is in fact the highest favour, ver. 10. The glory of the true Church is her freedom from local and national restrictions, ver. 11. None are excluded from her pale but those who exclude themselves and thereby perish, ver. 12. External nature shall contribute to her splendour, ver. 13. Her very enemies shall do her homage, ver. 14. Instead of being cast off, she is glorified for ever, ver. 15. Instead of being identified with one nation, she shall derive support from all, ver. 16. All that is changed in her condition shall be changed for the better, ver. 17. The evils of her former state are done away, ver. 18. Even some of its advantages are now superfluous, ver. 19. What remains shall be no longer precarious, ver. 20. The splendour of this new dispensation is a moral and spiritual splendour, but attended by external safety and protection, vers. 21, 22. All this shall certainly and promptly come to pass at the appointed time, ver. 22.]

1. Arise, be light; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah has risen upon thee. 2. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and a gloom the nations, and upon thee shall Jehovah rise, and His glory upon thee

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head; and put on garments of vengeance as armour, and clothed Himself in zeal as in a cloak. 18. According to the deeds, accordingly He will repay; burning wrath to His adversaries, punishment to His foes; the islands He will repay with chastisement.*

19. And they will fear the name of Jehovah from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun: for He will come like a stream dammed up, which a tempest of Jehovah drives away.† 20. And a Redeemer comes for Zion, and for those who turn from apostasy in Jacob, saith Jehovah.

21. And I, this is my covenant with them, saith Jehovah: My Spirit which is upon thee, and my word which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, and out of the mouth of thy seed, and out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and for ever.

THIRD PROPHECY.—CHAP. LX.

The Glory of the Jerusalem of the Last Days.

1. Arise, grow light: for thy light cometh, and the glory of Jehovah riseth upon thee. 2. For, behold, the darkness covereth the earth, and deep darkness the nations; and Jehovah riseth over thee, and His glory be-

* "Recompence to His enemies; to the far lands He will repay recompence."—*Arnold.* "Retribution to His enemies; to the countries He will repay retribution."—*Cheyne.*

† "When the adversary cometh in like the river, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."—*Kay.* "Shall put him to flight."—*Jones.* "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard in the midst thereof."—*Birks.* "For He shall come like a rushing stream, which the breath of Jehovah driveth."—*Cheyne.*

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shall be seen. 3. And nations shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising.

4. Lift up thine eyes round about (*i.e.*, in all directions) and see; all of them are gathered, they come to thee, thy sons from afar shall come, and thy daughters at the side shall be borne. 5. Then shalt thou see (or, fear), and brighten up (or, overflow), and thy heart shall throb and swell; because (or, when) the abundance of the sea shall be turned upon thee, the strength of nations shall come unto thee..

6. A stream of camels shall cover thee, young camels (or, dromedaries) of Midian and Ephah, all of them from Sheba shall come, gold and incense shall they bear, and the praises of Jehovah as good news. 7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered for thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to thee, they shall ascend with good-will (or, acceptably) my altar, and my house of beauty I will beautify.

8. Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows? 9. Because for me the isles are waiting (or, must wait) and the ships of Tarshish in the first place, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified thee.

10. And strangers shall build thy walls, and their kings shall serve thee; for in my wrath I smote thee, and in my favour I have had mercy on thee. 11. And thy gates shall be open continually, day and night they shall not be shut, to bring into thee the strength of nations and their kings led (captive, or, in triumph). 12. For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve thee shall perish, and the nations shall be desolated, desolated.

13. The glory of Lebanon to thee shall come, cypress, plane, and box together, to adorn the place of my sanctuary, and the place of my feet I will honour.

14. Then shall come to thee bending the sons of thy oppressors, then shall bow down to the soles of thy feet all thy despisers, and shall call thee the City of Jehovah, Zion the holy place of Israel (or, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel).

15. Instead of thy being forsaken and hated, and with none passing (through thee), and I will place thee for a boast of perpetuity, a joy of age and age. 16. And thou shalt suck the milk of nations, and the breast of kings shalt thou suck, and thou shalt know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and (that) thy Redeemer (is) the Mighty One of Jacob. 17. Instead of brass (or, copper) I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver, and instead of wood brass, and instead of stones iron, and I will place (or, make) thy government peace, and thy rulers righteousness.

18. There shall no more be heard violence in thy land, desolation and ruin in thy

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comes visible over thee. 3. And nations walk to thy light, and kings to the shining of thy rays.

4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: they all crowd together, they come to thee: thy sons come from afar, and thy daughters are carried hither upon arms. 5. Then wilt thou see and shine,* and thine heart will tremble and expand; for the abundance of the sea shall be turned to thee, the wealth of the nations cometh to thee. 6. A swarm of camels will cover thee, the foals of Midian and Ephah; they come all together from Saba; they bring gold and incense, and they joyfully make known the praises of Jehovah. 7. All the flocks of Kedar gather together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth will serve thee: they will come up with acceptance upon mine altar, and I will adorn the house of my adorning. 8. Who are these who fly hither as a cloud, and like the doves to their windows? 9. Yea, the islands wait for me; and the ships of Tarshish come first, to bring thy children from far, their silver and their gold with them, to the name of thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath ornamented thee.

10. And sons of strangers build thy walls, and their kings serve thee; for in my wrath I have smitten thee, and in my favour I have had mercy upon thee. 11. And thy gates remain open continually day and night, they shall not be shut, to bring into thee the possessions of the nations, and their kings in triumph.† 12. For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve thee will perish, and the nations be certainly laid waste. 13. The glory of Lebanon will come to thee, cypresses, plane-trees, and sherbin-trees, all together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and to make the place of my feet glorious. 14. The children also of thy tormentors come bending unto thee, and all thy despisers stretch themselves at the soles of thy feet, and call thee City of Jehovah, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

15. Whereas thou wast forsaken and hated, and no one walked through thee, I make thee now into eternal splendour, a rapture from generation to generation. 16. And thou suckest the milk of nations, and the breast of kings thou wilt suck, and learn that I Jehovah am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 17. For copper I bring gold, and for iron I bring silver, and for wood copper, and for stones iron, and make peace thy magistracy, and righteousness thy bailiffs.‡ 18. Injustice is no more seen in thy land, wasting and destruction in thy borders; and thou callest salvation thy walls, and renown thy gates.

19. The sun will be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness will the moon

* "Then shalt thou look and overflow with joy."—*Jones.* "Then shalt thou see and be radiant."—*Cheyne.*

† "And their kings royally attended."—*Jones.*

‡ "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness."—*Arnold.*

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borders (or, within thy bounds); and thou shalt call salvation thy walls, and thy gates praise. 19. No more shall be to thee the sun for a light by day, and for brightness the moon shall not shine to thee, and Jehovah shall become thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. 20. Thy sun shall set no more, and thy moon shall not be withdrawn; for Jehovah shall be unto thee for an eternal light, and completed the days of thy mourning. 21. And thy people, all of them righteous, for ever shall inherit the earth, the branch (or, shoot) of my planting, the work of my hands, to glorify myself (or, to be glorified). 22. The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation; I, Jehovah, in its time will hasten it.

LXI.—[After describing the new condition of the Church, he again introduces the great Personage by whom the change is to be brought about. His mission and its object are described by Himself in vers. 1–3. Its grand result shall be the restoration of a ruined world, ver. 4. The Church, as a mediator between God and the revolted nations, shall enjoy their solace and support, vers. 5, 6. The shame of God's people shall be changed to honour, ver. 7. The Church once restricted to a single nation, shall be recognised and honoured among all, ver. 9. He triumphs in the prospect of the universal spread of truth and righteousness, vers. 10, 11].

1. The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah (is) upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to bring good news to the humble, He hath sent me to bind up the broken in heart, to proclaim to captives freedom, and to the bound open opening (of the eyes or of the prison doors); 2. to proclaim a year of favour for Jehovah, and a day of vengeance for our God; to comfort all mourners, 3. to put upon Zion's mourners—to give them a crown instead of ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for a faint spirit; and it shall be called to them (or, they shall be called) the oaks of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah (*i.e.*, planted by Jehovah) to glorify Himself.

4. And they shall build up the ruins of antiquity, the desolations of the ancients they shall raise, and shall renew the cities of ruin (*i.e.*, ruined cities), the desolations of age and age. 5. Then shall stand strangers and feed your flocks, and the children of outland (shall be) your ploughmen and your vine-dressers. 6. And ye (or more emphatically, as for you), the priests of Jehovah shall ye be called, the ministers of our God shall be said to you (or, of you), the strength of nations shall ye eat, and in their glory shall ye substitute yourselves. 7. Instead of your shame (ye shall

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shine upon thee: Jehovah will be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. 20. Thy sun will no more go down, and thy moon will not be withdrawn; for Jehovah will be to thee an everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning will be fulfilled. 21. And thy people, they are all righteous; they possess the land for a sprout of my plantations, a work of my hands for glorification. 22. The smallest one will become thousands, and the meanest one a powerful nation.

I, Jehovah, will hasten it in His time.

FOURTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LXI.

The Glory of the Office is committed to the Servant of Jehovah.

1. The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is over me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to bring glad tidings to sufferers;* hath sent me to bind up broken-hearted ones, to proclaim liberty to those led captive, and emancipation to the fettered; 2. to proclaim a year of grace from Jehovah, and a day of vengeance from our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3. to put upon the mourners of Zion, to give them a head-dress† for ashes, oil of joy for mourning, a wrapper of renown for an expiring spirit, that they may be called terebinths of righteousness, a planting of Jehovah for glorification.

4. And they will build up wastes of the olden time, raise up desolations of the forefathers, and renew desolate cities, desolations of former generations. 5. And strangers stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners become your ploughmen and vinedressers. 6. But ye will be called priests of Jehovah; Servants of our God, will men say to you: ye will eat the riches of the nations, and pride yourselves in their glory.

7. Instead of shame ye shall have double, and (instead) of insult they rejoice at their portion: thus in their land‡ they will possess

* "The afflicted."—*Cheyne, Jones, Arnold.* "The poor."—*Birks.*

† "A coronet."—*Kay, Cheyne.* "A diadem."—*Strachey.*

"To appoint unto the mourners of Zion,
Yea, to give unto them ornament instead of ashes,
The oil of praise instead of a desponding spirit."—*Jones.*

‡ "In their own land."—*Kay.*

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have) double, and (instead of their) confusion they shall celebrate their portion; therefore in their land shall they inherit double, everlasting joy shall be to them. 8. For I am Jehovah, loving justice, hating (that which is) taken away unjustly, and I will give their hire truly, and an everlasting covenant I strike for them. 9. Then shall be known among the nations their seed, and their issue in the midst of the peoples. All seeing them shall acknowledge them that they are a seed Jehovah has blessed.

10. (I will) joy, I will joy in Jehovah, let my soul exult in my God; for He hath clothed me with garments of salvation, a mantle of righteousness has He put on me, as a bridegroom adjusts his priestly crown, and as the bride arrays her jewels. 11. For as the earth puts forth its growth, and as the garden makes its plants to grow, so shall the Lord Jehovah make to grow righteousness and praise before all the nations.

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double; everlasting joy will they have. 8. For I, Jehovah, love right, hate robbery in wickedness;* and give them their reward in faithfulness, and conclude an everlasting covenant with them. 9. And their family will be known among the nations, and their offspring in the midst of the nations: all who see them will recognise them, for they are a family that Jehovah hath blessed.

10. Joyfully I rejoice in Jehovah; my soul shall be joyful in my God, that He hath given me garments of salvation to put on, hath wrapped me in the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom who wears the turban like a priest, and as a bride who puts on her jewellery. 11. For like the land which brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden which causes the things sown in it to sprout up; so the Lord Jehovah bringeth righteousness to sprouting and renown before all nations.

LXII.—[The words of the great deliverer are continued from the foregoing chapter. He will not rest until the glorious change in the condition of His people is accomplished, ver. 1. They shall be recognised by kings and nations as the people of Jehovah, vers. 2, 3. She who seemed to be forsaken is still His spouse, vers. 4, 5. The Church is required to watch and pray for the fulfilment of the promise, vers. 6, 7. God has sworn to protect her and supply her wants, vers. 8, 9. Instead of a single nation, all the nations of the earth shall flow unto her, ver. 10. The good news of salvation shall no longer be confined, but universally diffused, ver. 11. The glory of the Church is the redemption of the world, ver. 12].

1. For Zion's sake I will not be still, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp (that) burneth. 2. And nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and there shall be called to thee a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall utter. 3. And thou shalt be a crown of beauty in Jehovah's hand, and a diadem of royalty in the palm of thy God. 4. No more shall it be called to thee (shalt thou be called) Azubah (Forsaken), and thy land shall no more be called Shemamah (Desolate), but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (my delight is in her), and thy land Beulah (married), for Jehovah delights in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5. For (as) a young man marrieth a virgin, (so) shall thy sons marry thee, and (with) the joy of a bridegroom over a bride shall thy God rejoice over thee.

6. On thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night long they shall not be silent. Ye that remind Jeho-

FIFTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LXII.

The Gradual Extension of the Glory of Jerusalem.

1. For Zion's sake I shall not be silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I shall not rest, till her righteousness breaks forth like morning brightness, and her salvation like a blazing torch. 2. And nations will see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and men will call thee by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will determine. 3. And thou wilt be an adorning coronet in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the lap† of thy God. 4. Men will no more call thee "Forsaken One;" and thy land they will no more call "Desert:" but men will name thee "My delight in her," and thy home "Married one:" for Jehovah hath delight in thee, and thy land is married. 5. For the young man marrieth the maiden, thy children will marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth in the bride, thy God will rejoice in thee.

6. Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, have I stationed watchmen; all the day and all the night continually they are not silent. O ye who remember Jehovah,‡ leave yourselves not

* "That which is wasted in wickedness."—*Kay.* "Things torn away unjustly."—*Cheyne.* "Robbery in burnt-offering."—*Birks.* "Robbery and wrong."—*Arnold, Strachey.*

† "In the open palm."—*Kay.*

‡ "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence."—*Arnold, Birks.*

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vah, let there be no rest to you, 7, and give no rest to Him, until He establish and until He place Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

8. Sworn hath Jehovah by His right hand, and by His arm of strength, If I give (*i.e.*, I will not give) thy corn any more as food to thine enemies, and if the sons of the outland shall drink thy new wine which thou hast laboured in (I am not God). 9. For those gathering it shall eat it, and shall praise Jehovah, and those collecting it shall drink it in my holy courts (or, in the courts of my sanctuary). 10. Pass, pass through the gates, clear the way of the people, raise high, raise high the highway, free (it) from stones, raise a banner (or, a signal) over the nations. 11. Behold, Jehovah has caused it to be heard to the end of the earth, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh; behold, His reward is with Him and His hire before Him. 12. And they shall call them the Holy People, the redeemed of Jehovah, and thou shalt be called Derushah (sought for), Ir-lo-neezabah (City not forsaken).

LXIII.—[The influx of the Gentiles into Zion having been described in the preceding verses, the destruction of her enemies is now sublimely represented as a sanguinary triumph of Jehovah or the Messiah, vers. 1–6. The prophet then supposes the catastrophe already past, and takes a retrospective view of God's compassion towards His people, and of their unfaithfulness during the old economy, vers. 7–14. He assumes the tone of earnest supplication, such as might have been offered by the believing Jews when all seemed lost in the destruction of their commonwealth and temple, vers. 15–19].

LXIV.—[This chapter is inseparable from the one before it. The strongest confidence is expressed in the divine power, founded upon former experience, vers. 1–3. The two great facts of Israel's rejection as a nation, and the continued existence of the Church, are brought together in ver. 4. The unworthiness of Israel is acknowledged still more fully, ver. 5, 6. The sovereign authority of God is humbly recognised, ver. 7. His favour is earnestly implored, ver. 8. The external prerogatives of Israel are lost, ver. 9. But will God for that cause cast off the true Israel, His own people? ver. 10].

1. Who (is) this coming from Edom, bright (as to his) garments from Bozrah, this one adorned in his apparel, bending in the abundance of his strength?

I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.

2. Why (is there) redness to thy raiment, and (why are) thy garments like (those of) one treading in a wine-press?

3. The press I have trodden by myself, and

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rest! 7. And give Him no rest, till He raise up, and till He set Jerusalem for a praise in the earth.

8. Jehovah hath sworn by His right hand, and by His powerful arm, Surely I no more give thy corn for food to thine enemies; and foreigners will not drink thy must, for which thou hast laboured hard. 9. No, they that gather it in shall eat it, and praise Jehovah; and they that store it, shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.

10. Go forth, go forth through the gates, clear the way of the people. Cast up, Cast up the road, clean it of stones; lift up a banner above the nations!* 11. Behold, Jehovah hath caused tidings to sound to the end of the earth. Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompence before Him. 12. And men will call them the holy people, the redeemed of Jehovah; and men will call thee, Striven after, A city that will not be forsaken. †

SIXTH PROPHECY.—CHAP. LXIII. 1–6.

Judgment upon Edom, and upon the whole world that is hostile to the Church.

1. Who is this that cometh from Edom, in deep red clothes from Bozrah? This, glorious in his apparel, bending to and fro in the fulness of his strength? ‡

I am he that speaketh in righteousness, mighty to aid.

2. Whence the red in thine apparel, and thy clothes like those of a wine-presser?

3. I have trodden the wine-trough alone,

* "A standard for the peoples."—*Kay.*

† And thou shalt be called "Sought out, City not forsaken."—*Cheyne.*

‡ "Tosseth his head in the fulness of his strength."—*Cheyne* "Confident in the greatness of his strength."—*R. E. B.*

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of the nations there was not a man with me; and I will tread them in my anger, and trample them in my fury, and their juice shall spirt upon my garments, and all my vesture I have stained. 4. For the day of vengeance (is) in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5. And I look, and there is none helping; and I stand aghast, and there is none sustaining; and my own arm saves for me, and my fury it sustains me. 6. And I tread the nations in my anger, and I make them drunk in my wrath, and I bring down to the earth their juice.

7. The mercies of Jehovah I will cause to be remembered, the praises of Jehovah, according to all that Jehovah hath done for us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel which He hath done for them, according to His compassions, and according to the multitude of His mercies.

8. And He said, Only they are my people, (my) children shall not lie (or, deceive), and He became a Saviour for them. 9. In all their enmity He was not an enemy, and the angel of His face (or, presence) saved them; in His love and in His sparing mercy He redeemed them, and He took them up and carried them all the days of old. 10. And they rebelled, and grieved His Holy Spirit (or, Spirit of holiness), and He was turned from them into an enemy, He himself fought against them.

11. And he remembered the days of old, Moses (and) his people. Where is He that brought them up from the sea, the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put within him His Holy Spirit? 12. Leading them by the right hand of Moses (and) His glorious arm, cleaving the waters from before them, to make for Him an everlasting name? 13. Making them walk in the depths, like the horse in the desert they shall not stumble. 14. As the herd into the valley will go down, the Spirit of Jehovah will make him rest. So didst Thou lead Thy people, to make for Thyself a name of glory.

15. Look (down) from heaven and see from Thy dwelling-place of holiness and beauty! Where is Thy zeal and Thy might (or, mighty deeds)? The sounding of Thy bowels and Thy mercies towards me have withdrawn themselves. 16. For thou (art) our Father; for Abraham hath not known us, and Israel will not recognise us; Thou Jehovah art our Father, our Redeemer of old (or, from everlasting) is Thy name. 17. Why wilt Thou make us wander, O Jehovah, from Thy ways? (why) wilt Thou harden our heart from Thy fear? Return, for the sake of Thy servants, the tribes

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and of the nations no one was with me: and I trode them in my wrath, and trampled them down in my fury; and their life-sap spirted upon my clothes, and all my raiment was stained. 4. For a day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption was come. 5. And I looked round, and there was no helper; and I wondered there was no supporter: then mine own arm helped me; and my fury, it became my support. 6. And I trode down nations in my wrath, and made them drunk in my fury, and made their life-blood run down to the earth.

THE THREE CLOSING PROPHECIES.

FIRST CLOSING PROPHECY.—CHAP. LXIII. 7–LXIV.

Thanksgiving, Confession, and Supplication of the Church of the Captivity.

7. I will celebrate the mercies of Jehovah, the praises of Jehovah,* as is seemly for all that Jehovah hath shown us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which He hath shown them according to His pity, and the riches of His mercies. 8. He said, They are my people, children who will not lie;† and He became their Saviour. 9. In all their affliction He was afflicted,‡ and the Angel of His face brought them salvation. In His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and lifted them up, and bare them all the days of the olden time.

10. But they resisted and vexed His Holy Spirit: then He turned to be their enemy; He made war upon them. 11. Then His people remembered the days of the olden time, of Moses: Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He who put the Spirit of His holiness in the midst of them; 12. who caused the arm of His majesty to go at the right of Moses; who split the waters before them, to make Himself an everlasting name; 13. who caused them to pass through abysses of the deep, like the horse upon the plain, without their stumbling? 14. Like the cattle which goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of Jehovah brought them to rest: thus hast Thou led Thy people, to make Thyself a majestic name.

15. Look from heaven and see, from the habitation of Thy holiness and majesty! Where is thy zeal and thy display of might? The pressure of thy bowels and thy compassions are restrained towards me. 16. For Thou art our Father; for Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel knoweth us not.§ Thou, O Jehovah, art our Father; our Redeemer is from olden time Thy name. 17. O Jehovah,

* "Jehovah's loving-kindnesses will I celebrate, Jehovah's deeds of renown."—*Cheyne.*

† "Deal falsely."—*Kay.* "Play the liar."—*Cheyne.*

‡ "In all their adversity He was no adversary; but the angel of His presence saved them."—*Kay, Jones.* "In all their affliction, His was the conflict, and," &c.—*Birks.* "In all their distress, He was distressed."—*Cheyne.* "In all their affliction, He was afflicted."—*R. E. B., and others.*

§ "Abraham taketh no notice of us, and Israel does not recognise us."—*Cheyne.*

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of Thy inheritance. 18. For a little Thy holy people possessed, our enemies trod down Thy sanctuary. 19. We are of old, Thou hast not ruled over them, Thy name has not been called upon them. Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens (and) come down, (that) from before Thee the mountains might quake (or flow down), LXIV. 1, as fire kindles brush, fire boils water — to make known Thy name to Thine enemies, from before Thee nations shall tremble. 2. In Thy doing fearful things (which) we expect not, (oh that) Thou wouldst come down, (that) the mountains before Thee might flow down. 3. And from eternity they have not heard, they have not perceived by the ear, the eye hath not seen, a God beside Thee (who) will do for (one) waiting for Him.

4. Thou hast met with one rejoicing and executing righteousness; in Thy ways shall they remember Thee; behold, Thou hast been wroth, and we have sinned; in them is perpetuity, and we shall be saved. 5. And we were like the unclean all of us, and like a filthy garment all our righteousness (virtues or good works), and we faded like the (fading) leaf all of us, and our iniquities like the wind will take us up (or, carry us away). 6. And there is no one calling on Thy name, rousing himself to lay hold on Thee; for Thou hast hid Thy face from us, and hast melted us because of (or, by means of) our iniquities.

7. And now, Jehovah, our Father (art) Thou, we the clay and Thou our potter, and the work of Thy hands (are) we all. 8. Be not angry, O Jehovah, to extremity, and do not to eternity remember guilt; lo, look, we pray thee, thy people (are) we all. 9. The holy cities are a desert, Zion is a desert, Jerusalem a waste. 10. Our house of holiness and beauty (in) which our fathers praised Thee has been burned up with fire, and all our delights (or, desirable places) have become a desolation. 12. Wilt Thou for these (things) restrain Thyself, O Jehovah, wilt Thou keep silence and afflict us to extremity?

LXV.—[The great enigma of Israel's simultaneous loss and gain is solved by a prediction of the calling of the Gentiles, ver. 1. This is connected with the obstinate unfaithfulness

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why leadest Thou us astray from Thy ways; hardenest our heart, so as not to fear Thee? Return for Thy servants' sake, the tribes of Thine inheritance. 18. For a little time Thy holy people was in possession. Our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary. 19. We have become such as He who is from everlasting has not ruled over, upon whom Thy name was not called. LXIV. 1. O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, come down, the mountains would shake before Thy countenance;—2. (wouldst come down) as fire kindles brushwood, fire causes water to boil; to make known Thy name to Thine adversaries, that the heathen may tremble before Thy face! 3. When Thou doest terrible things which we hoped not for; wouldst come down, (and) mountains shake before Thy countenance! *

4. For from olden time men have not heard, nor perceived, nor hath an eye seen, a God beside thee, who acted on behalf of him that waiteth for Him. 5. Thou didst meet him that rejoiceth to work righteousness, when they remembered Thee in Thy ways.

Behold, Thou, Thou art enraged, and we stood as sinners there; already have we been long in this state, and shall we be saved? † 6. We became like the unclean thing, and all our virtues like a garment soiled with blood; and we all faded away together like the leaves; and our iniquities, like the storm, they carried us away. 7. And there was no one who called upon Thy name, who aroused himself to lay firm hold of Thee: for Thou hadst hidden Thy face from us, and didst melt us into the hand of our transgressions. ‡

8. And now, O Jehovah, Thou art our Father: we are the clay, and Thou our Maker; § and we are all the work of Thy hand. 9. Be not extremely angry, O Jehovah, and remember not the transgression for ever! Behold, consider, we beseech Thee, we are Thy people.

10. The cities of Thy holiness have become a pasture-ground; Zion has become a pasture-ground, Jerusalem a desert. 11. The house of our holiness and of our adorning, where our fathers praised Thee, is given up to the fire, and everything that was our delight given up to devastation. 12. Wilt Thou restrain

* "When Thou didst terrible things, which we looked not for, Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence."—*Birks.* "To make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, so that nations trembled before Thee, while Thou didst terrible things which we hoped not for: [that Thou didst come down, that the mountains shook at Thy presence] yea, from old men have not heard," &c. —*Cheyne,* who adopts the suggestion that the words in brackets have been repeated by accident from ver. 1. "The passage gains greatly by their removal."

† "Behold, Thou wast wroth, and we were guilty: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved."—*Kay.* "Yea, Thou hast been wroth, and we have sinned, and still by these are we preserved from of old."—*Birks.* "Behold, Thou art wroth (for we have sinned) with Thy people continually!—and shall we be saved?" —*Arnold.* "Behold, Thou wast wroth when we sinned; [Thou wast] against them of old, and shall we be saved?"—*Jones.* "Behold, Thou wast wroth, and we sinned; * * * and we went astray."—*Cheyne.*

‡ "And hast delivered us into the hand of our iniquities."—*Cheyne.* "And Thou causest us to perish by our iniquities."—*R. E. B.*

§ "Our fashioner."—*Cheyne.*

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of the chosen people, ver. 2. They are represented under the two main aspects of their character at different periods, as gross idolaters and as pharisaical bigots, vers. 3–5. Their casting off was not occasioned by the sins of one generation, but of many, vers. 6, 7. But even in this rejected race there was a chosen remnant, in whom the promises shall be fulfilled, vers. 8, 10. He then reverts to the idolatrous Jews, and threatens them with condign punishment, vers. 11, 12. The fate of the unbelieving carnal Israel is compared with that of the true spiritual Israel, vers. 13–16. The gospel economy is described as a new creation, ver. 17. Its blessings are represented under glowing figures borrowed from the old dispensation, vers. 18–19. Premature death shall be no longer known, ver. 20. Possession and enjoyment shall no longer be precarious, vers. 21–23. Their very desires shall be anticipated, ver. 24. All animosities and noxious influences shall cease for ever, ver. 25.]

1. I have been inquired of by those that asked not, I have been found by those that sought me not; I have said, Behold me, behold me, to a nation (that) was not called by my name. 2. I have spread (or, stretched) out my hands all the day (or, every day) to a rebellious people, those going the way not good, after their own thoughts (or, designs) — 3. the people angering me to my face continually, sacrificing in the gardens, and censing on the bricks; 4. sitting in the graves, and in the holes they will lodge, eating the flesh of swine, and broth of filthy things (is in) their vessels; 5. the (men) saying, Keep to thyself, come not near to me, for I am holy to thee,—these (are) a smoke in my wrath, a fire burning all the day (or, every day). 6 and 7. Lo, it is written before me, I will not rest except I repay, and I will repay into their bosom your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith Jehovah, who burned incense on the mountains, and on the hills blasphemed me, and I will measure their first work into their bosom.

8. Thus saith Jehovah, as (when) juice is found in the cluster, and one says, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, so will I do for the sake of my servants, not to destroy the whole. 9. And I will bring forth from Jacob a seed, and from Judah an heir of my mountains, and my chosen ones shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. 10. And Sharon shall be for (or, become) a home of flocks, and the valley of Achor a lair of herds, for my people who have sought me.

11. And (as for) you, forsakers of Jehovah, the (men) forgetting my holy mountain, the (men) setting for Fortune a table, and the (men) filling for Fate a mingled draught;

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thyself in spite of this, O Jehovah, be silent, and leave us to suffer the utmost?

SECOND CLOSING PROPHECY.—CHAP. LXV.

Jehovah's Answer to the Church's Prayer.

1. I was discernible to those who did not inquire, discoverable by those who did not seek me.* I said, "Here am I, Here am I," to a nation where my name was not called. 2. I spread out my hands all the day to a refractory people, who walked in the way that was not good, after their own thoughts. 3. The people that continually provoketh me by defying me to my face, sacrificing in the gardens, and burning incense upon the tiles; 4. who sit in the graves, and spend the night in closed places; to eat the flesh of swine, and broken pieces of abominations is in their dishes; 5. who say, Stop! come not too near me; for I am holy to thee: they are a smoke in my nose, a fire blazing continually.

6. Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence without having recompensed, and I will recompense into their bosom. 7. Your offences, and the offences of your fathers together, saith Jehovah, that they have burned incense upon the mountains, and insulted me upon the hills, and I measure their reward first of all into their bosom.

8. Thus saith Jehovah, As when the must is found in the cluster, men say, Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing within it, so will I do for the sake of my servants, that I may not destroy the whole. 9. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and an heir of my mountains out of Judah, and my chosen ones shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. 10. And the plain of Sharon becomes a meadow for flocks, and the valley of Achor a resting-place for oxen, for my people that asketh for me.

11. And ye, who are enemies to Jehovah, O ye that are unmindful of my holy moun-

* "I am sought of them who asked not [of me]; I am found [of them] that sought me not."—*Jones, R. E. B.* "I gave ear to them that asked not for me."—*Arnold.* "I have offered answers to those who have not asked; I have been as hard to those who have not sought me."—*Cheyne.*

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12. and I have numbered you to the sword, and all of you to the slaughter shall bow; because I called and ye did not answer. I spake and ye did not hear, and ye did the (thing that was) evil in my eyes, and that which I desired not ye chose.

13 and 14. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Lo! my servants shall eat and ye shall hunger; lo, my servants shall drink and ye shall thirst; lo, my servants shall rejoice and ye shall be ashamed; lo, my servants shall shout from gladness of heart, and ye shall cry from grief of heart, and from brokenness of spirit ye shall howl. 15. And ye shall leave your name for an oath to my chosen ones, and the Lord Jehovah shall slay thee, and shall call His servants by another name (lit. call another name to them), 16. (by) which the (man) blessing himself in the land (or, earth) shall bless himself by the God of truth, and (by which) the (man) swearing in the land (or, earth) shall swear by the God of truth, because forgotten are the former enmities (or, troubles), and because they are hidden from my eyes.

17. For lo I (am) creating (or, about to create) new heavens and a new earth, and the former (things) shall not be remembered, and shall not come up into the mind (lit. on the heart). 18. But rejoice and be glad unto eternity (in) that which I (am) creating, for lo, I (am) creating Jerusalem a joy, and her people a rejoicing. 19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and there shall not be heard in her again the voice of weeping and the voice of crying. 20. There shall be no more from there an infant of days, and an old man who shall not fulfil his days, for the child a hundred years old shall die, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. 21 and 22. And they shall build houses and inhabit (them), and shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them, they shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree (shall be) the days of my people, and the work of their hands my chosen ones shall wear out (or, survive). 23. They shall not labour in vain, and they shall not bring forth for terror; for the seed of the blessed of Jehovah are they, and their offspring with them. 24. And it shall be (or, come to pass), that they shall not yet have called and I will answer, yet (shall) they (be) speaking and I will hear. 25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed as one, and the lion like the ox shall eat straw, and the serpent dust (for) his food. They shall not hurt and they shall not corrupt (or, destroy) in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah.

LXVI.—[This chapter winds up the prophetic discourse with an express prediction of

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tain, who prepare a table for Gad, and fill up mixed drink for the goddess of destiny, —12. I have destined you to the sword, and ye will bow down to the slaughter, because I have called, and ye have not replied, I have spoken, and ye have not heard; and ye did evil in mine eyes, and ye chose that which I did not like.

13. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Jehovah: Behold my servants will eat, but ye will hunger; behold my servants will drink, but ye will thirst; behold my servants will rejoice, but ye will be put to shame; 14. behold my servants will exult for delight of heart, but ye will cry for anguish of heart, and ye will lament for brokenness of spirit. 15. And ye will leave your name for a curse to my chosen ones, and the Lord, Jehovah, will slay thee; but His servants He will call by another name. 16. so that whosoever blesseth himself in the land will bless himself by the God of truthfulness,* and whosoever sweareth in the land will swear by the God of truthfulness,* because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they have vanished from mine eyes.

17. For behold I create a new heaven and a new earth; and men will not remember the first, nor do they come to any one's mind. 18. No, be ye joyful and exult for ever at that which I create: for behold I turn Jerusalem into exulting, and her people into joy. 19. And I shall exult over Jerusalem, and be joyous over my people, and the voice of weeping and screaming will be heard in her no more. 20. And there shall no more come thence a suckling of a few days, and an old man who has not lived out all his days; for the youth in it will die as one a hundred years old, and the sinner be smitten with a curse as one a hundred years old.†

21. And they will build houses and inhabit them, and plant vineyards and enjoy the fruit thereof. 22. They will not build and another inhabit, nor plant and another enjoy; for like the days of trees are the days of my people, and my chosen ones will consume the work of their hands. 23. They will not weary themselves in vain, nor bring forth for sudden disaster; for they are a family of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring are left to them.

24. And it will come to pass: before they call, I will answer; they are still speaking, and I already hear. 25. Wolf and lamb then feed together, and the lion eats chopped straw like the ox, and the serpent—dust is its bread. They will neither do harm nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah.

* "By the God of the AMEN."—*Cheyne, Kay.*

† "For he that dieth a hundred years old shall die a youth; and he that falleth short of a hundred years shall be held accursed."—*Jones.* "There shall no more be any from thence, infant of days or old man, that shall not have fulfilled his days."—*Kay.*

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the change of dispensation, and a description of the difference between them. Jehovah will no longer dwell in temples made with hands, ver. 1. Every sincere and humble heart shall be His residence, ver. 2. The ancient sacrifices, though divinely instituted, will henceforth be as hateful as the rites of idolatry, ver 3. They who still cling to the abrogated ritual will be fearfully but righteously requited, ver. 4. The true Israel cast out by these deluded sinners shall ere long be glorified, and the carnal Israel fearfully rewarded, vers. 5, 6. The ancient Zion may already be seen travailing with a new and glorious dispensation, vers. 7, 9. They who mourned for her seeming desolation, now rejoice in her abundance and her honour, vers. 10–14. At the same time the carnal Israel shall be destroyed, as apostates and idolaters, vers. 14–17. The place which they once occupied shall now be filled by the elect from all nations, ver. 18. To gather these, a remnant of the ancient Israel shall go forth among the Gentiles, ver. 19. They shall come from every quarter, and by every mode of conveyance, ver. 20. They shall be admitted to the sacerdotal honours of the chosen people, ver. 21. This new dispensation is not to be temporary, like the one before it, but shall last for ever, ver. 22. While the spiritual Israel is thus replenished from all nations, the apostate Israel shall perish by a lingering decay in the sight of an astonished world, ver. 23, 24.]

1. Thus saith Jehovah, the heavens (are) my throne, and the earth my footstool: where is (or, what is) the house which ye will build for me, and where is (or, what is) the place of my rest? 2. And all these my own hand made, and all these were (or, are), saith Jehovah; and to this one will I look, to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and trembling at my word.

3. Slaying the ox, smiting a man—sacrificing the sheep, breaking a dog's neck—offering an oblation, blood of swine—making a memorial of incense, blessing vanity—also they have chosen their ways, and in their abominations has their soul delighted. 4. I also will choose their vexations, and their fear I will bring upon them; because I called and there was no answering, I spake and they did not hear, and they did evil in my eyes, and that which I delight not in they chose.

5. Hear the word of Jehovah, ye that tremble at His word. Your brethren say, (these) hating you and casting you out for my name's sake, Jehovah will be glorified, and we shall gaze upon your joy—and they shall be ashamed. 6. A voice of tumult from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of Jehovah, rendering requital to His enemies!

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THIRD CLOSING PROPHECY.—CHAP. LXVI.

Exclusion of Scorners from the Coming Salvation.

1. Thus saith Jehovah: The heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool. What kind of house is it that ye would build me, and what kind of place for my rest? 2. My hand hath made all these things; then all these things arose, saith Jehovah; and at such persons do I look, at the miserable and broken-hearted, and him that trembleth at my word.* 3. He that slaughtereth the ox is the slayer of a man; he that sacrificeth the sheep is a strangler of dogs; he that offereth a meat offering, it is swine's blood; he that causeth incense to rise up in smoke, blesseth idols. As they have chosen their ways, and their soul cherisheth pleasure in their abominations; 4. so will I choose their ill-treatments, † and bring their terrors upon them, because I called and no one replied, I spake and they did not hear, and they did evil in mine eyes, and chose that in which I took no pleasure.

5. Hear ye the word of Jehovah, ye that tremble at His word: your brethren that hate you, that thrust you from them for my name's sake, say, "Let Jehovah get honour, that we may see your joy;" they will be put to shame.

6. Sound of tumult from the city! Sound from the temple! Sound of Jehovah, who repays His enemies with punishment.

7. Before she travailed she brought forth;

* "But to this will I look, even to him that is poor, and contrite in spirit, and trembleth at my word."—*Birks.* "Afflicted, and crushed in spirit."—*Cheyne.* "Meek and of a contrite spirit."—*Arnold.*

† "Freaks of fortune."—*Cheyne.* "I also will choose to mock them."—*Arnold Strachey.*

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7. Before she travailed she brought forth, before her pain came she was delivered of a male. 8. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall a land be brought forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once? For Zion hath travailed, she hath also brought forth her children. 9. Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth? saith Jehovah. Or am I the one causing to bring forth, and shall I shut up? saith thy God.

10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and exult in her, all that love her; be glad with her with gladness, all those mourning for her, 11. that ye may suck and be satisfied from the breast of her consolations, that ye may milk out and enjoy yourselves, from the fulness (or, the full breast) of her glory. 12. For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I am extending to her peace like a river, and like an overflowing stream the glory of nations; and ye shall suck; on the side shall ye be borne, and on the knees shall ye be dandled. 13. As a man whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and in Jerusalem shall ye be comforted. 14. And ye shall see, and your heart shall leap (with joy), and your bones like grass shall sprout, and the hand of Jehovah shall be known to His servants, and He shall be indignant at His enemies.

15. For lo, Jehovah in fire will come, and like the whirlwind His chariots, to appease in fury His anger, and His rebuke in flames of fire. 16. For by fire is Jehovah striving and by His sword with all flesh, and multiplied (or, many) are the slain of Jehovah. 17. The (men) hallowing themselves and the (men) cleansing themselves to (or, towards) the gardens after one in the midst, eaters of swine's flesh and vermin and mouse, together shall cease (or, come to an end), saith Jehovah.

18. And I—their works and their thoughts—it is come—to gather all the nations and the tongues—and they shall come and see my glory. 19. And I will place in them (or, among them) a sign, and I will send of them survivors (or, escaped ones) to the nations, Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, drawers of the bow, Tubal and Javan, distant isles, which have not heard my fame, and have not seen my glory, and they shall declare my glory among nations. 20. And they shall bring all your brethren from all nations, an oblation to Jehovah, with horses, and with chariot, and with litters, and with mules, and with dromedaries, on my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Jehovah, as the children of Israel bring the oblation in a clean vessel to the house of Jehovah. 21. And also of them will I take for the priests, for the Levites, saith Jehovah. 22.

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before pains came upon her, she was delivered of a boy. 8. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen anything like it? Are men delivered of a land in one day? Or is a nation begotten at once? For Zion hath travailed, yea, hath brought forth her children. 9. Should I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith Jehovah: or should I, who cause to bring forth, shut up? saith thy God.

10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and exult over her, all ye that love her; be ye delightfully glad with her, all ye that mourn over her, 11. that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breast of her consolations, that ye may sip and delight yourselves in the abundance of her glory. 12. For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I guide peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like an overflowing stream, that ye may suck; ye shall be borne upon arms, and fondled upon knees. 13. Like a man whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14. And ye will see, and your heart will be joyful, and your bones will flourish like young herbage; and thus does the hand of Jehovah make itself known to His servants, and fiercely does He treat His enemies. 15. For behold Jehovah, in the fire will He come, and His chariots are like the whirlwind, to pay out His wrath in burning heat, and His threatening passeth into flames of fire. 16. For in the midst of fire Jehovah holds judgment, and in the midst of His sword with all flesh; and great will be the multitude pierced through by Jehovah. 17. They that consecrate themselves and purify themselves for the gardens behind one in the midst, who eat swine's flesh and abomination and the field mouse—they all come to an end together, saith Jehovah. 18. And I, their works and their thoughts—it comes to pass that all nations and tongues are gathered together, that they come and see my glory.*

19. And I set a sign upon them, and send away those that have escaped from them to the Gentiles, to Tarshish, Phûl and Lûd, to the stretchers of the bow, Tubal and Javan—the distant islands that have not heard my fame and have not seen my glory, and they will proclaim my glory among the Gentiles 20. And they will bring your brethren out of all heathen nations, a sacrifice for Jehovah, upon horses and upon chariots, and upon litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain, to Jerusalem, saith Jehovah, as the children of Israel bring the meat-offering in a clean vessel to the house of Jehovah. 21. And I will also add some of them to the priests, to the Levites, saith Jehovah. 22. For as the new heaven and the new

* "But [I will punish] their works and their thoughts; [behold the time] is come that I gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory."—*Cheyne.* *Arnold* treats the words: "For I know their works and their thoughts," as the completion of a paragraph, and commences the next paragraph: "It shall come, that I will gather all nations," &c.

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For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I am making (or, about to make), are standing (or, about to stand) before me, saith Jehovah, so shall stand your name and your seed.

23. And it shall be (or, come to pass) that from new-moon to new-moon (or, on every new-moon), and from Sabbath to Sabbath (or, on every Sabbath), shall come all flesh to bow themselves (or, worship) before me, saith Jehovah. 24. And they shall go forth and gaze upon the carcases of the men who revolted (or, apostatised) from me, for their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a horror to all flesh.

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earth, which I am about to make, continue before me, saith Jehovah, so will your family and your name continue. 23. And it will come to pass, from new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh will come, to worship before me, saith Jehovah. 24. And they go out and look at the corpses of the men that have rebelled against me, for their worm will not die, and their fire will not be quenched, and they become an abomination to all flesh.

END OF VOL. I.

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